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DORINDA.

VOL. II.

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DORINDA

147

BY

THE COUNTESS OF MUNSTER

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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DORINDA.

CHAPTER I.

‘Honour widows that are widows indeed.’

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B.

OON after Leonora's arrival, and just as she had begun to love Olive with all the warmth of her fresh young heart, the fiat went forth that, at all events for awhile, the happy home, pretty Riverstairs, must be forsaken; and Mr. Ramsay and his wife started hurriedly for Italy, reluctantly leaving their

little girl behind, under the charge of an old nurse, who had been provided by Lady Glenalmond, much against Olive's will, whose ideas as to the management of a little girl, (delicate from her birth,) differed widely from those of the stern old grandmother, whose method was to 'drag up' children, instead of bringing them up. But poor Olive, at the moment of her departure, was too overwhelmed by grief about her husband, too crushed by fears, to combat the old lady's will,—a will always much stronger than anyone else's ! besides, she dreaded any unseemly outbreak of Lady Glenalmond's bitter temper, just at the moment when Ion should be spared all annoyance. So there was nothing for

it but to submit; but Olive's anxieties and distress were doubled at the thoughts of the possible want of tenderness which her little Iona might have to undergo for the next few months.

Iona never saw her father again, for he died in Italy, and Olive returned alone in a yacht which had been sent to Leghorn by her father, to bring the young widow home to her child. *S.M.A. - Shah Nadin.*

During the last few weeks of Ion's illness, knowing perfectly the hopelessness of his state, his one object had been to guide his beloved wife's future, and to warn her of the difficulties which he foresaw would beset her path. He impressed upon her (while recounting the

hard measure dealt out by his parents to his brother's orphan children) how he wished her to help and befriend Leonora ; and Olive assured him that she should ever be to her a sacred charge.

‘ Oh, my love !’ he said one day to the weeping Olive. ‘ How I thank God that you, from your own fortune, are independent of everyone. But remember, darling, that my poor father and mother will not love you the more, for being the mother of a little daughter, who will, in right of her father, be the prospective heiress to my mother's lovely Highland home, Cairnloch ;—and, Olive !’ he added, with much solemnity, and with tears in his eyes, ‘ mind my words ! Let no worldly consideration for the child's

supposed benefit, induce you to part with Iona! Bring her up at your own side.'

'Darling, where, and to whom could I entrust her?' exclaimed Olive, deeply distressed. 'Why, she will be my only treasure, when you,—my stay,—my support,—my blessing, have left me!' and, casting herself on her knees by his bedside, the weeping wife, so soon to be a widow, hid her face on the manly heart which, she knew—alas! would ere long cease to beat!

This latter hint of her dying husband Olive scarcely took in at the moment he made it; but the day soon came when his words forced themselves upon her memory, and she felt forewarned and forearmed.

After Ion Ramsay's death, and after he had been laid to his rest in the Italian churchyard, Olive wended her widowed way back to Riverstairs; and, as she neared the place she loved so well, she felt she would have given almost everything she possessed,—have made almost any sacrifice,—to obtain the love of her dead husband's parents; and when she drove up to the familiar doorway, she experienced a sort of wild hope that Lady Glenalmond would, perhaps, have taken the little trouble to meet and welcome her on her return to her all but desolate home; for,—as there was a door of communication between the gardens,—it would (Olive thought) have been such a small exertion on her mother-in-

law's part!—such a feasible sign of sympathy!—but one which would have given her (Olive) such an enormous amount of pleasure.

But that was not the old lady's way. Indeed, it would never have entered her head to perform so gracious, so tender an act! And Olive tried hard, as she entered the house, to think she did not expect it; but she did not realize how she had built upon the hope, till she experienced the disappointment; for, of course, Lady Glenalmond was not there!

Olive's feeling of pain at her mother-in-law's neglect soon, however, gave way to one of supreme delight, when her little Iona sprang into her arms looking well and happy.

The nurse, who accompanied the child, and who Olive had scarcely noticed at the dreadful moment of her departure for Italy, was by no means of a prepossessing appearance. She was a fat, forbidding looking female, with a red face, a deep voice, and enormous hands, and rejoiced in the name of 'Drax;' but Olive, in spite of the antipathy she at once conceived for her, being anxious to conciliate Lady Glenalmond, decided to give the woman a fair trial; so she smiled kindly at her, as she made a profound curtsey, and murmured a few gracious words; but she could not avoid seeing the jealous annoyance in the nurse's face when the little maid Rosa (who had lived at Riverstairs ever since Iona's birth) sprang forward, at

seeing her mistress,—clasped her hand,—and covered it with tears and kisses.

This was the first warm home-greeting Olive had received from anyone (Iona's kiss excepted), and she never forgot it, and, after an affectionate recognition of the girl's sympathy, she turned to Drax, and asked after Lord and Lady Glenalmond, and were they at Falcon's Rest?

‘Yes, my lady,’ answered Drax, ‘they are quite well, and Lady Leonora is staying there, with her ladyship, and she wishes to come and see your ladyship——’

‘Which?’ asked Olive, faintly. ‘Lady Glenalmond, or Lady Leonora?’

‘Lady Leonora, my lady; she would like to come this evening.’

‘Oh!’ answered Olive, ‘I shall be very,

very glad to see Lady Leonora, or Lady Glenalmond, but I cannot see anyone this evening, I am so very tired, and to-morrow the duke—my father comes. I will write to Lady Leonora.'

In spite of Olive's wish for rest, and for a quiet few hours with her little girl, Leonora would not, could not keep away, and after the first sad meeting was over, Olive felt pleased she had come; but the girl told her many things about her grandparents, which did not tend to put the latter in an amiable light, or to encourage Olive's hopes of gaining their affection.

'My eldest brother, Ramsay,' said Leonora, 'came to see me soon after you left for Italy; he is just of age, and independent (luckily for him) of the old

people ; and he was very angry to hear of their reception of me, and settled a large allowance upon me ; but he says I can't live with him till he marries, which he seems in no hurry to do ; so here I am still ! and oh, I am so glad to see you, dear, dear Olive ! and Ramsay sent his love, and he is so sorry, dear, for you, and he wants you to be good to poor me, and let me come to see you every day ; but we mustn't seem to care too much for each other, or the old birds will be poking their beaks in, and stopping our fun. They hate seeing people happy.'

‘ Oh, Leonora !’

‘ Fact, I assure you ! But call me “ Nell,” and, oh ! I forgot ; they want you to go and see them, as soon as you can, and

bring Iona. You know they never saw Iona once while you were away; I used to come every day to see her, and Drax used to go to them. I asked if I might meet you on your arrival,—for, darling,—I felt so for you, but they wouldn't let me! Pray come and see them as soon as you can, or they will be cross. I am sure they have some especial reason for wishing to see you,—I don't know what it is, but they have got a lawyer,—and I don't know what all!

‘Well, I fear no lawyer; but I can't come to-morrow, for my father comes—I will come the day after.’

‘Oh! they won't like that.’

‘Why?’

‘They think they should be first always.’

‘My father,’ said Olive, proudly, ‘comes first for every reason ; but, for Ion’s dear sake, they come next. Oh, Nell, do you think they will ever love me?’

‘Never!’ said Nell, promptly, ‘so don’t expect it;’ with which oracular and not over-comforting speech, Leonora left, carrying with her a letter from Olive to Lady Glenalmond, saying she would obey her summons ‘the day after to-morrow,’ and that she would bring Iona.

The duke’s visit took place the following day, and, the morning after, the dreaded visit to Falcon’s Rest was undertaken.

Weak and unnerved from her recent sorrow, Olive trembled as she started, with her little Iona toddling at her side.

After passing through the garden door, they entered a long walk, bordered by beautiful lime-trees,—a walk consecrated to Olive by many sacred memories of her happy and brief courtship.

At the end of the lime-walk was an old archway, partially covered by ivy, in which was embedded an ancient clock which struck the quarters in a peculiarly shrill tone, audible at a great distance.

Olive and Iona now found themselves on a terrace, hanging over the river, (like the one at Riverstairs,) and turning sharply to the right, they crossed a beautifully-kept lawn, and found themselves standing at the principal garden entrance to the house.

Falcon's Rest was built in a castel-

ated form, and above the porch were the Glenalmond arms and coronet, carved in stone. The two supports were falcons—birds of ferocious aspect; and as Iona looked timidly at their beaks, claws, and enraged countenances, she expected every moment to see them attack and tear each other's hearts out; but she need not have been alarmed, for they were perfect types of their owners, and had none.

Olive rang the bell, and as she waited to be admitted, she probably looked pale, for Iona crept close to her side, and whispered, in an awe-struck tone,

‘Is mum *frightened* at the birds?’



CHAPTER II.

‘ Ah ! do not, when my heart hath ’scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquered woe ;
Give not a windy night, a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow.’



HE door was opened speedily,
and Leonora bounded out,
(Olive knew not from whence,)
and throwing her arms round that nervous lady’s neck, exclaimed :

‘ I saw you dear things coming “ toodling up, ” looking so good and innocent, and

I wanted to kiss you once; before you were pecked to death by the parent birds! They *are* so cross and *beaky*! What a blessing it would be if they would take a lesson from the Kilkenny Cats!—tear each other to shreds, and “adone!” (as Drax says).’

‘Oh, hush!’ cried Olive, in a terrified whisper, ‘they will surely hear what you say; but, do tell me,—Do you know whether they are going to say anything particular to me, and what is it?’

‘I don’t know,’ answered Leonora, rather gravely; ‘but there is some mischief brewing, for I caught Drax sneaking in by the back-door, early this morning; and, after she had been with the old birds a little, I burst into the room,—quite innocently, as if I thought nobody

was there,—and there they all three were, looking like the witches in “Macbeth.” “Grandpa” looked like an old woman, and “grandma” like an old man; and Drax—well, she looked like an attendant fiend—barring the tail!

‘Oh, hush!’ again said Olive. ‘But, Drax!—Why was Drax there? And without my knowledge too!’

Quoth Leonora: ‘Beware of Drax! she is a snake in the grass! She is always gliding in and out of this house; and, oh! wouldn’t the old birds like to peck your eyes out,—if they only dared! and wouldn’t they and Drax dance a war-dance over you afterwards, that’s all!’

Olive felt mortified,—offended also at being watched; but, hearing her name

loudly announced, and coming almost suddenly out of the daylight, into a large room, entirely furnished in bright, deep blue, for a moment she was blinded; but gradually she saw a blue carpet, blue curtains, blue chairs, and the glass in the windows all blue; and then she perceived Lord and Lady Glenalmond standing,—two gaunt figures,—to receive her.

For a moment, Olive was speechless, and all she could realize was that Ion—her Ion—was dead, and that these two individuals were his father and mother. So with a little gasp of anguish, and a wild longing for motherly sympathy, she cast herself, weeping, upon Lady Glenalmond's neck. We cannot say 'into

her arms,'—for the old woman made not the slightest attempt to embrace, or even to support her daughter-in-law. She suffered poor Olive's hands to clasp themselves round her stony neck (there was not the vestige of a bosom for any aching head to rest upon!—Lady Glenalmond was, to do her justice, guiltless of anything so feminine or foolish!), while she stood upright, impassive, cold, as if she were a monumental pillar,—not a cross, mind you; for *that* stretches out its blessed arms to receive the whole world of sin, or suffering—but a monumental pillar, of black (her eyes) and white (her hair) granite.

Lady Glenalmond freed herself as soon as possible from Olive's encircling arms,

just as she would have taken off some article of dress, that incommoded her, and then pointing to Lord Glenalmond, said with a broad Scotch accent :

‘ And heeeres Lorrerd Glenammond !’

Olive, wounded and indignant at this cruel reception, quickly recovered herself, and shaking hands coldly with the old man, sat down, while, with much loving tact, Leonora took a low seat close behind her, so that she might, (without the old people seeing her,) place her hand caressingly on Olive’s shoulder, where it remained during the whole painful interview, thus reminding the young widow that, at all events, *one* was present who felt for, and loved her.

An awkward pause now ensued, during which Olive become more convinced than

ever that Leonora had been right in suspecting that she and her child had been brought there for some especial purpose ; and to her surprise on looking round, for the first time, she remarked that sitting at a writing-table, at some distance behind Lord, and within full view of Lady Glenalmond, sat an unwholesome-looking young man, whose every drop of blood (which was decidedly not blue) seemed to have settled in a nose which had not the faintest indication of a bridge to it ; in fact it, and the much-bulged-out and unhealthy cream-coloured cheeks, reminded one of a mattress, which had been tightly ‘punched,’ and neatly knotted in the middle with a crimson rosette, (the nose). Strewed on the table in front of

him were some documentary papers, while a small ink-bottle, which evidently lived in his pocket, lay uncorked before him. The young man seemed uneasy, was constantly nibbling the top of his pen, and gazed vacantly but untiringly at Lady Olive.

‘Who, and what is he?’ thought Olive.
‘He looks like a shorthand writer!’

At this moment Lady Glenalmond deigned, for the first time, to notice Iona who had climbed, unchecked, on to her mother’s lap.

‘Little bi,’ said Lady Glenalmond, in her bewildering Scotch, ‘and whae arre ye?’

‘I beg your pardon?’ said Olive, wonderingly.

‘Hech! and whae’s the bi?’ impatiently repeated her ladyship.

‘ Oh !’ said Olive, laughing, ‘ it’s not a boy ; this is my little girl. Iona ! go and kiss Lady Glenalmond, darling !’

Iona slowly got off her mother’s lap, and with a perplexed glance at Lord Glenalmond’s silk cap, and at the manly appearance of her grandmother, judged wrongly as to the sex of the individuals, and running up to Lord Glenalmond kissed him. The old man’s face was suffused with a burning blush, as he felt the baby lips upon his cheek ; and gently pushing the little girl towards his wife he said :

‘ Go and kiss your grandmother. I—I am your grandfather.’

Iona turned to Lady Glenalmond, and put up her face to be kissed. Lady Glenalmond pecked at the child with her

beak, and then said reprovingly to Olive,

‘And hwhy d’ye dress her as a bi?’

Olive heard Leonora laughing behind her, and could hardly keep her countenance; but she answered, gently,

‘Oh! I see now why you think she looks like a boy; she is not very strong, and Dr. James made me cut her hair off—quite short.’

‘And hwhat’s her name, and her age?’ asked Lady Glenalmond, who knew all about the child as well as Olive did; but the questions were for the benefit of the unwholesome young man behind, who duly chronicled all Olive’s replies.

Olive looked surprised.

‘She is between three and four, and her name,’ she added, faintly, feeling sure

something painful would follow her answer, 'is Iona.'

'Iona!—hech! hwhat a name! Some furrin name, mebbe?—a *Gerrman* name, after yeere faither's people.'

'No, Lady Glenalmond,' answered Olive, falteringly. 'It was the nearest name to—to Ion.' And, bursting into tears at this first open allusion to her dead husband, Olive wept bitterly for some minutes.

Lord Glenalmond moved uneasily in his chair, the unwholesome young man bit the top of his pen with increased vigour, and Lady Glenalmond exclaimed, with much bitterness and in an audible aside,

'Nae better than a chayld—nayver was, and nayver wull be.' Then, turning

to Iona (who was kissing her mother's tears away), and with obstinate persistency pretending still to forget the child's sex, she said: 'Little bi, hwhen ye're aulder, ye must larn not to cry at eevry-thing, d'ye knaw?'

Iona looked wonderingly at the old woman, but Olive was fairly roused, and said, indignantly,

'Everything!—everything, do you say, Lady Glenalmond? Do you mean that to lose the best husband, the best father—ay, and the best son, as you have,—though such a common, every-day occurrence, is not to be mourned in tears of blood! Nay, let my Iona weep, weep, and drown herself in tears, rather than own a heart that scorns to feel!'

Lady Glenalmond was totally unaccustomed to being addressed in such a tone, and the colour flew up to the very roots of her gray hair, and, closing her bony hand into a fist, she would have answered with some violence, had not Lord Glenalmond bent forward, and, touching his wife's arm, said,

‘ My leddy ! let's to business. It's nae use greeting o'er speelt meelk.’

The old lady thereupon calmed herself with difficulty, and Lord Glenalmond proceeded to address the astonished Olive.



CHAPTER III.

She that was ever fair, and never proud,
 Had tongue at will and yet was never loud,
 Never lacked gold, and yet never went gay,
 She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh,
 Bade her wrong stay, and poor displeasure fly.

SHAKESPEARE.

Beware
 Of entrance to a quarrel ; but being in,
 Bear it, that the opposer may beware of thee !

SHAKESPEARE.

‘**L**EDDY OLIVE,’ said Lord Glen-
 almond, ‘my wife and I wish
 to make a proposection to ye
 concurrning the leetle gurrel Iona.’

Olive clasped the little hand closer in her own, and seemed to hear her husband's dying words :

‘ Let no earthly consideration separate you from Iona.’

‘ I see, I see,’ she whispered to herself, ‘ they want to take her from me. Ah ! they little know ! they little know !’ Then aloud, she said mildly to Lord Glenalmond :

‘ A proposition ! May I ask what it is ?’

‘ Weel, ye knaw the gurrel is reelly ours.’

‘ But surely mine first ?’ put in Olive, gently.

‘ Ours,’ repeated the old man, not noticing the interruption, ‘ and one day

she'll be the leddy of Cairnloch, Leddy Glenalmond's Heeland hoose.'

'I know, I know,' said Olive, waving her hand.

'She knaws!' repeated Lady Glenalmond, ironically, 'she's shure to knaw, so fur.'

'Weel,' continued the old earl, irritably motioning to his wife to be silent, 'we wish, for a conseederation—a braw conseederation, mind ye;' (here the unwholesome young man disengaged his pen from his teeth and dipped it into the ink, supposing from Lord Glenalmond's words that the time for £ s. d., consequently *his* time, had come) 'to mak' ye a proposeetion.'

'A consideration!' exclaimed Olive, proudly ignoring what she now shrewdly

expected ; ‘ a consideration, did you say ?
what *can* you mean ?’

‘ Weel,’ answered Lord Glenalmond, rather uneasily, ‘ not to put too fine a point on it, we wish to tak Iona, the gurrll-lie, to educate her after our own ideas. Of course we should not object to yeere seeing yeere chayld, but we wish to mak’ a Ramsay of her, not a Roslyon, because of Cairnloch—d’ye tak my meaning ?’

Olive trembled, and Lady Glenalmond, thinking from her silence that she could scarcely have understood the offer which she (Lady Glenalmond) considered had been over-delicately put, said,

‘ Ye see, Leddy Olive, ye’re a puir bit body that means weel, but ye’ve na strenth o’ purrrrrpose ; ye’re no purrrrrpose-layke.

The chayld too is a puny bit bairn that wants hustling and bustling aboot. Now, we'll warrk her better nor ye can,' (Olive shuddered), 'and, if ye'll give the bairn to us, we'll tak her off yere hands—boarrrd and keep her for naething, and give ye nae trubble; d'ye see now? So tell us hwhat's yere wull?'

Quoth Lord Glenalmond,

'We'd even allow ye a thousand a-year, and——'

'Stop, Lord Glenalmond!' said Olive, with passionate resentment, 'why not put it in plain words? You want me to sell you my child, body and soul! and that man,'—pointing to the lawyer's clerk,—'is to witness the bargain!' (The unfortunate Limb of the Law here referred to, seeing

himself ‘glowered at’ by three hostile-looking individuals, with much presence of mind, dropped, and stooped to recover, all his documents ; thus placing the table betwixt himself and any missile which might possibly, he thought, be hurled, by some one of the belligerents, at his innocent head !)

‘Bide a bit,’ said my lord. ‘That young man has two “docyments” there. One is for your leddyship to sign, if ye wull. The other docyment’ (so pronounced by his lordship) ‘is my leddy’s Wull. If ye, Ledy Olive, sign the firrrst, gieing us the bairn, ye’ll find yersel a rich buddy, and the bairn will be a grayt heiress, as her grandmither was before her, with lands, hoose, furrniture, historical

jew'ls ; but if, on the ither pairt, ye refuse, my leddy will leave the bairn naething but the bare walls, and only the lands she's obleeged to inhairit ; while the furrniture, jewl's, plate will be sold, d'ye mind ? So, if ye refuse, ye'll injure the *gurrel-lie* for ever and a day.'

'And now,' cut in Lady Glenalmond, who had been dying once more to put in her word, 'and now, me Leddy Olive, hwhat's yer wull ?'

'May I look at the documents ?' asked Olive, quietly.

'Ye may,' answered my lord, thinking that he saw signs of capitulation in Olive's attitude, and taking the papers from the clerk's hand. 'Here's my leddy's Wull, and here,'—putting the second document in

Olive's hand—'is the docyment of—of——'
—'Of my child's sale,' put in Olive,
calmly.

She looked carefully over its provisions,
and then, before she could be prevented,
tore it into strips, and threw it at Lord
Glenalmond's feet.

'I refuse,' she said, 'to sell my child to
anyone, and least of all to you, her grand-
parents, who so wickedly and disgracefully
belie your relationship. No! I will bring up
my child—as my Ion wished me to do,—as
a Roslyon, you call it,—but as a woman, I
call it, who loves and honours God and her
mother more than all your wealth of gold
and glitter! God is my child's only Father
now (you are not worthy of the name),
but He is a just and all-powerful one. He

will see her righted, if you, or anyone, seek to injure her ! Take from her, if you will, all that in common justice should be hers, I care not,—nor will she ; for I, God be thanked, have enough and to spare, and when old enough she will rejoice in my decision of to-day. But, remember, old man and old woman, both of you nearing the bourne from whence no man returns, remember that here on earth, and here only, can you serve God in the capacity of father, mother, master, or mistress ! You are travelling quickly to meet your own Father, your own Master, and He will ask you how you have dealt with the young lives He put under your care here.

‘How are you dealing with the father-

less children of your elder son? How are you treating the widow and orphan of the second? Why do you covet my ewe-lamb, when you have others calling to you for help—languishing for Love? Do you remember that the Widow and the Orphan are God's especial charge?—and also, do you remember how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven?

‘Farewell, my lord! Farewell, my lady! and may God forgive—ay, and pity you,—as I do!’

With these words Olive took Iona by the hand, and, kissing Leonora, approached the door; and the last view she had of the old couple was,—Lady Glenalmond with malice and hate in every line of her face, signing the codicil to her Will, (by which

Iona was mulcted of many of her rights ;) while her old husband stood wrathfully by her side, the young clerk meanwhile looking terrified at them both.

‘Bravo!’ exclaimed Leonora, as Olive hastened from the house, ‘you told my lord and my lady some truths that they never heard before. Oh! Olive, I wish I might live with you! I fear they may now prevent my coming to you.’

‘I hope I did not say too much,’ said Olive, tearfully, ‘for I would not wish to insult my Ion’s parents. After all, I only acted as he told me to do.’

Olive did not feel safe till she was once more in her own garden with Iona, and in the evening she was much grieved at receiving a letter from Leonora, written in

great distress, for she had been forbidden either to visit, or to write to, Olive again ; and to Olive's further sorrow, as she was walking the next morning in the shrubbery, she came upon some masons who were hard at work, 'by the earl's orders,' (they said,) bricking up the beloved doorway between the gardens ; thus doing away with one of the dearest relics of the Past ; for through that door her beloved Ion used to visit her,—first as a pleasant acquaintance (during her mother's lifetime) and then as a lover ; and, as she thought thereon,—she wept ! *S. M. A. Shah Nade*

Olive did not stay much longer at River-stairs at that time, but while she remained, she did her utmost to soften the old people's hearts towards her. She wrote

humble, filial letters, saying that if, in the heat of the moment, she had spoken bitterly, she repented it. She urged upon them that even now, her life without her husband was sad enough,—and how *could* she be expected to sacrifice her child also? In one of these pleading letters she related how her husband had made her promise solemnly, under no circumstances, ever to lose sight of their child! and that, therefore, had she given her up, even to the nearest and dearest, she would have been unfaithful to a sacred trust. But her letters were not answered, at last they were returned unopened, and Olive then gave up all hope of reconciliation, feeling she could personally do no more. The fact also of Leonora's being forbidden to visit

her added so much to her sorrow, that her father's kind heart pitied her forlorn position, and he decided to write to Lord Glenalmond himself, putting before him, in a manly and feeling way, how natural it was for a young mother,—and that mother a widow,—to refuse to part with her only child. The duke also stated in the letter that he was commissioned by his daughter once more to express her deep distress at the estrangement, and also that she never should feel happy till she had gained Lord and Lady Glenalmond's forgiveness and love.

In a few days the duke received the following answer :

‘MY LORD DUKE,

‘Families have their own troubles

and their own joys, not to be meddled with or understood—by strangers, however exalted their rank. Your daughter has made her choice, and she must abide by it; and it is a subject I refuse to enter upon with anyone.

‘Your humble servant,

‘GLENALMOND.’

After this rebuff the duke gave it up as hopeless, at present, and, pitying Olive’s forlorn position, he purchased a beautiful house for her at Kensington, advising her to live there quietly, and educate Iona under her own eye.

Olive followed her father’s advice, and for several years led a happy, but uneventful life, with the description of which

we need not weary our readers ; suffice it to say that Iona grew up into a lovely but delicate girl, and that her love for her mother fully repaid the latter, for the many sacrifices she had made for her sake.

After a few years, Olive's kind adviser and best friend—her beloved father—died, and once more her tender heart yearned over her husband's parents, and she determined to make one more venture ; so writing to Lady Glenalmond she told her that she and her child were going abroad for a year or two, and that she could not feel happy, unless permitted to present herself at Falcon's Rest, to bid her father and mother-in-law, 'goodbye,' and to obtain their blessing for Iona.

In answer to this, a letter arrived from Leonora, saying that her grandmother

thanked Olive for her 'kind letter,' that she 'wished her and Iona well,' but would not see them now, as she 'disliked good-byes.' The old lady, however, concluded by saying that if Olive would come to Falcon's Rest on her return from abroad, she would then receive her and the child.

Leonora added a private postscript, saying that Lord and Lady Glenalmond were well, but much aged, and considerably softened. She advised Olive not to press for a meeting now, for she (Leonora) felt sure, should they still be alive when Olive returned, that they would both be friendly.

This was more than Olive had dared to hope for; so she left England with a lighter heart, having let Riverstairs for some years.



CHAPTER IV.

‘Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies.’



AFTER travelling about rather aimlessly for some time, Lady Olive settled at Dresden, so as to give Iona,—now aged fourteen,—the advantages of cultivating Music, and the German language.

Besides Lady Olive and her daughter,

the *suite* consisted of a governess, two maids, and an old French man-servant named Bardel, who had entered Lady Olive's service just before her widowhood.

There was considerable difficulty in finding a suitable residence at Dresden, embracing all necessary *agréments* as to situation, &c., but after a little hesitation Lady Olive hired the first floor of the Hotel de l'Europe, in the Alt Markt; and after making a trial of it for a few days, they found it so comfortable, that they took the rooms for a year, and never regretted it, for they were superlatively happy there.

Saxony was, at that time, a happy little kingdom,—at peace with itself

and everyone else. It possessed a King, a Queen, and a Royal Family that it loved, and by whom it was beloved.

The King and Queen used, in those days, to walk about the town *en bourgeois*, laying no claim to public loyalty and respect,—as a form,—but receiving both as a moral right, and as an affectionate tribute to their simple, kindly, and charitable lives.

As yet, kingdom had not risen against kingdom, brother against brother, cousin against cousin, might against right;—nor as yet had there been killing, dethroning, ruining,—in the name of German Unity! and, although the glorious strains of the ‘Wacht am Rhein’ were familiar to Olive’s and Iona’s ears, its dominant chord had

not then the warning, threatening ring, that it has now !

The situation of the Hotel de l'Europe in the Alt Markt, was a very pleasant one ; privately, Lady Olive would have preferred a quieter *quartier*, but Iona liked Life ; and what pleased her child, Olive felt bound to prefer for her sake ! However, she soon got accustomed to the busy, ever-changing scene around her, and got to love it for its own !

The only drawback to the perfect comfort of the hotel was that the Frau-haus-hälterinn and her 'Mann' (an enormously fat, heavy German ; sandy-haired, and with a pipe always in his mouth—like a Brobdignag baby, with its coral and bells) were not always of one mind.

The 'Frau-haushälterinn' was, in appearance, a small and spare woman, but decidedly wiry. She was very pale, with rolling, dark eyes, and a mouth like a crooked cavern—peopled by an army of black and broken teeth. Tradition alleged that, in early married life, she and her 'Mann' had agreed even less well than they did now; and that, one day, seeing his Frau was inclined to obstinacy upon some point, the sturdy German had enforced his side of the argument, with the aid of a brass candlestick; that she received a wound from eye to mouth, which entirely displaced the latter feature, causing it to settle down (or rather up) into the middle of her cheek, in close vicinity to the nearest available ear.

We may presume that this outburst of marital authority was never forgotten by the Frau-haushälterinn—or forgiven; also, that, as the years rolled by, contrary to expectation, the gray mare proved the better horse. For certain it is that, when sounds of altercation arose from the kitchen (as they frequently did), the female voice was ever the loudest, and was accompanied by metallic sounds, as of cooking utensils being freely aimed at some human being, whose footsteps could be heard ‘dodging’ about for safety. Then doors would be violently opened and shut, and finally there was a slam—the triumphant turning of a key—and—silence!

One day Lady Olive, having been much

disturbed and exercised in her mind as to the meaning of one of these outbreaks, sent for Frau Schmidt to inquire particulars ; whereupon that lady appeared, still boiling over with rage, and heated from her recent encounter. She assured Olive that for the next day or two the gnädige Frau need fear no further annoyance, ‘as Herr Schmidt was safe in the butter-cellar!’ but, seeing that her explanations mystified Lady Olive more than ever, Frau Schmidt proceeded to explain that Herr Schmidt was too fond of conviviality—that he constantly returned home inebriated ;—that if he was only slightly so, he was infinitely more difficult to manage, than when he was brought home helpless ; for in the latter case she could

shut him up without resistance in the cellar in which she kept the gnädige Frau's Normandy-butter-pots; but that when he was able to resist, she had to resort to stratagem,—or to kitchen utensils!

‘To-day, gnädige Frau,’ she continued, ‘I have had great trouble, but—at last, I have got him under lock and key; he can do no harm now, for it is quite dark; there are a few rats,—and he sits amongst the butter-pots, until he weeps;—then I let him out,—and forgive him!’

After this revelation, Olive was fain to be content, and thought it best to ask no farther questions.

A daily fair went on in the quaint old Alt Markt, beneath the hotel windows,

up to mid-day ; the peasants walking in from great distances, bringing in goods of all sorts, (not always of the most savoury description, such as sauer-kraut in great tubs, and goat's flesh ;) butter, eggs, yards of black bread, milk, toys, flowers, ginger-bread used also to be laid out on the stalls for sale ; and, long before Iona's window was opened in the morning, the sellers had arrived, and were sitting smiling at their posts.

The women wore dark blue or brown knitted jackets, with coloured borders, and ugly flat headgear, tied under their chins by broad black ribbons. They invariably owned a wealth of coarse fair hair, coiled round and round their heads which were generally bullet-shaped ; indeed, these

women's figures altogether reminded one of the *contour* of a ninepin, and were anything but graceful.

Certainly if the civilization of a country or its reverse, is to be gauged, as people aver, by the treatment awarded to its females, Saxony, in the days that Lady Olive was living there, could not have been far advanced ; for Iona used daily to watch the poor countrywomen, as they tramped into the town, bent double beneath the weight of huge crates strapped to their shoulders, full of nondescript wares, such as cheeses, vegetables, china, and even chairs and tables ! (Oftener than not, the burden on the poor woman's back was not the only one she had to carry !)

These poor women, besides the pack

upon their backs, would sometimes also be harnessed to a light cart, full of odds and ends, and perhaps a baby or two. Generally *der gute Mann* would walk by his Frau, smoking leisurely; and should the cart chance (as was frequently the case) to be drawn by dogs, he would at times take a seat therein,—watching his draught animals (*i.e.*, wife and dogs) struggling cheerfully on their way.

(Truly the primeval curse, at that time, bore heavily upon the Saxon female; for not only did she take upon her her own portion, as prescribed by Holy Writ, but the sweat of the feminine brow seemed also to earn the daily bread!)

Every morning Iona and Miss Milward would look out of their window,

and nod a friendly *guten Morgen* to the old men and women sitting at their stalls, with whose faces they had become quite familiar; and it was an evident pleasure to the simple peasants, to receive the greetings of *die schöne Engländerinn*.

Iona and her governess used always to take an early walk before breakfast, and they generally chose the gardens of the Japanese Palace for their matutinal excursions. They liked starting very early, because few people were about, and, as Miss Milward would say, 'before the sweet morning air had been polluted by the German pipes!'

Smoking then was rarely indulged in in England, and was always spoken of as 'a dirty German habit:' refraining

from which, was usually cited as one of the many proofs of British superiority!

“Times is changed,”
Says the dogs'-meat man.’

The gardens of the Japanese Palace (so-called from some quaint oriental figures with which the building was ornamented) were very pretty,—situated on the banks of the Elbe; and they had a great attraction for Iona, in consequence of the numberless squirrels which dwelt among the trees. These little creatures became marvellously tame, for, as Miss Milward and Iona fed them every morning with biscuits and nuts, they seemed to look out for the daily meal, and to have lost all fear; running quite familiarly across the girls' path;

then—swinging themselves into a tree,—they would spring from branch to branch above their benefactresses' heads, keeping pace with them as they walked.

One morning, to Iona's and Miss Milward's great annoyance, they came across a party of officers carrying guns; and, before the young men were aware of the ladies' vicinity, one of them took aim,—fired,—and in a moment one of the poor little squirrels, (which was especially known to Iona, in consequence of a very dark streak upon its back,) lay wounded and struggling at Miss Milward's feet.

With streaming eyes, and words of angry disgust, Iona lifted the suffering little animal from the ground, and tenderly held it to her bosom, heedless of the

blood which was staining her white frock, or of the surprise that hers and Miss Milward's appearance had created amongst the sportsmen.

The young officer who had shot the squirrel seemed really touched at Iona's distress, and overwhelmed her with regrets ; but she took no notice of him, being too angry at the wanton cruelty of the act ; and Miss Milward (who was an eminent surgeon's daughter, and had picked up a smattering of her father's knowledge) sat down on a bench, and, after carefully examining the grunting atom of suffering, tore her handkerchief into strips, and stopped the bleeding.

‘ See, Iona,’ she said, ‘ its poor little leg is broken. Fetch me a stick from some

branch, and give me the ribbon off your hair, and I will make a splint.'

No sooner said than done. The broken limb was bound up (the blood-thirsty delinquent standing awkwardly by during the process), and the squirrel tenderly laid upon a bed of leaves, within the basket which had held the biscuits and nuts. Miss Milward and Iona then rose to leave the spot, and the young man, once more addressing Iona (whose tears were still flowing), begged to be permitted to carry the basket home for the *Fräulein*; but Iona could not condone the cruelty, and answered curtly that there was 'No need of his interference.'

Evidently much chagrined, the young officer bowed profoundly, and rejoined his companions, who had halted a short

distance off, and were watching their comrade's discomfiture with some amusement.

As Iona moved away, her pretty hair, which had been loosened when the ribbon was taken for the splint, came tumbling down in all its rich profusion, like a pale yellow veil, concealing her girlish figure. With an exclamation of annoyance, she endeavoured, as best she could, to gather it together again, and, only partially succeeding, she hurried home with Miss Milward, who remarked, (although Iona did not,) that the young man, having delivered up his gun to a servant, followed the ladies at a respectful distance, thus discovering their dwelling-place.



CHAPTER V.

‘Lassie, ye’re but young yet !
Wait awee !’



THE adventure was related to Lady Olive, who was awaiting the pedestrians with a comfortable breakfast, and the three ladies concentrated their united efforts to relieve the poor little squirrel ; but, in spite of all their nursing and tenderness, it lay grunting dismally for a few hours—refused all food—and died !

Iona shed a few tears, and was then persuaded by her mother to start with her, and explore the beauties of the Green Vaults ; that fairy abode full of almost impossible treasures,—such enormous emeralds !—such flashing diamonds !

As they entered the Schloss-gasse, and Iona was chattering nonsense to her patient mother concerning a delightful little monster that dwelt in the enchanted palace ; (as she called the Green Vaults,) declaring herself enamoured of him ; (he was composed of a single oblong pearl, and represented the court dwarf of some dusky Queen of Spain,) and expressing her conviction that some day, while she was gazing at him, the whole palace and all its gems would collapse,—that the

monster alone would survive,—be turned into a beautiful prince,—and claim her (Iona) as his bride!—her mother caught her by the hand, and said hastily :

‘Hush, Iona ! the King and Queen are coming ! As they pass, stand quite still out of their way, facing them, and bow your head.’

Iona looked up, and beheld, coming towards her, a middle-aged, dignified old gentleman in uniform, with a lady on his arm. They passed, and Iona followed her mother’s injunctions, and to her great delight she heard the King say, after saluting Lady Olive :

‘Wass fur ein schones Madchen !’ and the Queen answered :

‘Ja ! Wundeschon ! Ach ! sie sind Eng-

länderinnen ! Die Engländerinnen sind immer schon !

Iona raised her eyes, after the King and Queen had passed, and she saw to her great surprise, that the young man who was with them, was the murderer of the poor little squirrel ! He saluted the ladies also as he passed, and smiled.

‘ I suppose,’ said Iona, ‘ he is one of the King’s gentlemen !’

‘ I think,’ answered Miss Milward, ‘ he must be one of the royal princes, from the deference people seem to be paying him !’

‘ Mamma !’ said Iona, ‘ why does not our dear Queen walk about amongst us, as this King and Queen do ?’

‘ Because, my dear, we are unfortun-

ately a vulgar nation! We mob and annoy her. Here, the King and Queen can trust themselves to their people's delicacy and generosity, so there can be greater freedom on both sides.'

A few days afterwards Lady Olive heard that it was the custom for the King and Queen of Saxony, one day in the year, to dine in public, in a large room in the palace, where there was a gallery above, in which the public were permitted to stand, and that people were also allowed to gaze at the royal eaters through the windows. The next day chanced to be the festive day, and, as Iona was anxious to see the sight, Lady Olive asked a young man, a relation of the English minister, to take Iona and her governess to the palace.

It was a curious sight. All the male scions of the royal family were in uniform, while the Queen and the Princesses, and the ladies of the Court, came in full evening dress.

Iona recognised the diamond crown, worn by the Queen, as having seen it in the Green Vaults, and remembered the official in charge had told her, that its weight was so enormous, that the Queen was always ill for days after wearing it; and Iona remarked that she looked pale,—and as if she were going to faint; but, like a true Queen, she bore the pain for hours.

Suddenly Iona called out:

‘ Oh, Miss Milward. I declare, there is the murderer! now we will find out who

he is !' and turning to the gentleman who was with her, she said, ' Can you tell me the name of the gentleman in uniform sitting nearly opposite to the King ? The young man who is looking up here,—I really believe he is looking at me.'

' Did I hear you—' said Mr. ——, ' call him a murderer ?'

Iona laughed, and related the story of the squirrel's tragic death.

' Dear me ! Why, Miss Ramsay, that is Prince ——, the King's nephew, and after his father he will be the King of Saxony !'

Iona was much surprised, but said,

' Well, whoever he is, I should never like him !'

Mr. — now told Iona that the dinner was nearly over, and it would be better to get away before the crush ; and he also said, (which she was delighted to hear,) that after the dinner was over, all the uneaten delicacies were distributed amongst the sick poor.

What Iona liked most at Dresden was the opera. The orchestra was so beautiful, and her mother frequently took her to hear Madame Schröder Devrient sing in ‘Fidelio,’ and in ‘I Metecchi ed i Capuletti.’

One night, while at the opera, one of the young princesses entered the royal box with a single lady. The princess looked

pale and was very lovely. Iona did not hear her name, but she was told she was very unhappy, and, some said, half-witted; and between the acts, the poor thing leant very forward out of the box, and began making signs, bowing and smiling at the individuals in the body of the house, upon which the lady in charge of her, who was rather an alarming-looking person, swooped down upon her condescendingly smiling charge, and carried the reluctant damsel off.

Lady Olive and her daughter were very sorry when the year had run out, and they had to leave Dresden. They did so one morning very early, just as the

peasants (some of whose faces Iona knew so well), were pouring into the market.

The carriages were ready packed, and standing at the entrance to the hotel; the *Frau-haushälterinn* was at the door, looking rather inclined to cry; her *gute Mann*,—who had spent the previous night in company with the rats, sitting upon the butter jars,—had been released, so that, according to the usage of the day, he might place his hand beneath Lady Olive's elbow, as she left his house, and entered the carriage. A small crowd had assembled,—principally of Iona's simple market acquaintances,—who had brought her little parting offerings of flowers, fruit, and gingerbread; some of them even pressed forward, to kiss her hand tearfully; for

the pretty English girl, by little acts of gentle kindness, had endeared herself to them all.

The postillions, in yellow jackets (the colours of Saxony), with shiny black hats and boots, and a horn slung at their backs, had mounted, and were just about to start, when the crowd suddenly parted asunder;—the postillion held in his horse,—and a young man rushed forward wearing an eager and rather sorrowful expression. It was the squirrel's murderer,—the young son of Prince John. He hastily saluted the ladies,—placed a beautiful bouquet in Iona's hands,—and, with a fervent '*Leb' wohl schöne, schöne Engländerin!*'—plunged once more into the crowd and disappeared.

‘There! Iona,’ said Lady Olive, laughingly, ‘if we only had stayed a little longer, you might some day have been Queen of Saxony!’





CHAPTER VI.

'As became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies.'

A GREAT change came over Dorinda before she again ventured into the outer world, and, when she reappeared, she was no longer the pretty, *piquante*, fascinating young girl, but the dignified, gracious, and perfectly beautiful young woman, eminently possessing, besides her beauty,

that indescribable something which Frenchmen so aptly call *le charme*. She also consciously wielded a mysteriously powerful influence over everyone with whom she came in contact. This influence was not always a wholesome, nor, at times, a pleasurable one, for, if she did not fascinate, she repelled, while some much-to-be-commiserated individuals confessed to being the victims of both sensations at once.

Her manner was very gentle, and her voice marvellously tender and persuasive. Sweet words would drop from between her lovely lips, reminding one of the pearls and diamonds which fell from the pretty damsel's mouth in the fairy tale ; but whether her jewels were

the 'genuine article,' or only glass and glamour; or whether they turned into toads and serpents,—which crawled slimily away, while people were not looking,—not many cared to inquire. Some few did, however, and I have heard them say that in spite of her caressing words, they had never seen her perform any single act of spontaneous kindness or unselfishness,—such as kissing a little child, or pitying any overdriven or suffering animal.

The good and gentle Duchess of Cheviotdale always firmly believed that she had been the means of rescuing Dorinda from a home teeming with the most singular dangers and temptations; but whether the aspersions which Do-

rinda cast upon her parents, were absolutely true in every particular, utterly false, or only exaggerated, it was difficult for people to decide; that the duke and duchess believed in them, we may be certain, and we shall now hear how they came to do so; and how they came to make Dorinda's acquaintance.

One day Lord and Lady Basingstoke, living at Wimbledon, gave an open-air entertainment, called in those days a 'breakfast,' (presumably because the guests were bidden at about four a.m.) The Duke and Duchess of Cheviotdale had just arrived; and, while greeting his host, the duke cast his eyes around upon the assembled beauty and fashion, and, suddenly beholding Dorinda, he was so

struck by her excessive loveliness, that he asked her name, and in the course of the afternoon desired that she should be presented to him. This ceremony having been performed, the fascinated duke, after a short conversation, offered his arm with obsolete courtesy to the flattered damsel, and the two, mutually pleased with each other, proceeded to make the grand tour of the gardens, which were spacious, and possessed many points of attraction, amongst others, a rustic seat for two, within a secluded bower,—a perfect nest of roses, jessamine, and other sweet-smelling flowers.

Little recked the duke that the lovely girl at his side, robed in virgin white—and the very personification of innocence

and purity—was in reality a desperate and all but despairing woman ; that her very desperation had sharpened her never-very-rusty wits, and that directly she marked the duke's evident admiration, she determined, like a gambler, to whose knowing gaze some unlooked-for, but quickly-recognised chance has suddenly presented itself, to risk, as it were, her last coin, in hopes of something turning up—she knew not what, and scarcely cared.

Towards this rustic seat, then, the duke and his fair companion leisurely sauntered, and by the way Dorinda cudgelled her brains, endeavouring to call to mind all that she had ever heard concerning the life, tastes, character, &c., of her com-

panion, so as to avoid *gauche* mistakes, and to propitiate him as much as possible.

‘There is a duchess somewhere, I know, worse luck!’ she communed with herself; ‘and I think the little old woman in gray, with a big nose and galoshes—is her—’ (grammar av aunt!)—‘or is that the rich pig-dealer’s wife? Can’t be! A pig-dealer’s wife, however rich, would hardly dare to wear galoshes at a Breakfast—however damp the grass I think there are no children; but,—Cheviotdale—Cheviotdale—I remember the name quite well,— Ah! now I remember’ (a light breaking in on her). ‘He is Lady Margaret Saville’s uncle, the girl that came after me to Nun’s Court—to be touched up by the Woodcocks! Oh, good graci-

ous ! what an unfortunate muddle ! I wonder whether the old hens said anything against me to her. I have no doubt they did ! Beasts ! I wonder whether Lady Margaret told anything to the duke and duchess, and whether she lives with them ? Not entirely, I think—— Oh ! I remember now, the duke hates Roman Catholics like poison. I wonder whether the duchess wants a first-class 'panion ? I'd turn Protestant like a shot, if she'd take me—I wonder——'

Here her 'wonderings' had to cease, for they had reached the bower, and they both sat down.

The conversation between Dorinda and her old admirer flowed amusingly enough,

at first, upon every-day topics, but gradually the duke discovered that, years ago, he had been intimately associated with some of his companion's relations; and this fact, coupled with his ever-growing admiration of the fair girl, tempted him, after awhile, to express a most tenderly paternal interest towards her, which she (estimating to the full the value of so powerful a friend) heartily encouraged. A full hour, and more, passed quickly (and pleasantly to the old duke), and as soon as our heroine thought the opportunity was ripe, she cleverly seized it, and—shyly at first, but with child-like confidence—at last,—spontaneously (?) opened her heart to him; relating to the bewildered, but sympathising old man,

such a complicated history of the home-sorrows, wrongs, and even dangers that daily surrounded her, that each particular gray hair of his old head stood on end !

Then she proceeded, with thrilling pathos and infinite tact (but under the seal of secrecy), to confide to him that, unless she agreed that very day, at that very Breakfast, to accept either the old reprobate, Lord Vanbrugh, or the drunkard baronet, Sir Charles Wilding, (both of whom, she assured the duke, had come to Wimbledon to propose), her parents had announced their intention of sending her abroad to a convent, under the charge of a wicked old priest, who was staying at her home for that purpose.

At this point of the narrative, the duke—

who (as Dorinda had luckily remembered) was renowned for his anti-Catholic tendencies, and for his old-fashioned horror of, and superstitious belief in, the unscrupulous and blood-thirsty propensities of the genus Catholic priest,—put his hand tenderly and protectingly upon the girl's shoulder, murmuring soothingly,

‘No, no, this must not be! This must be stopped!’

Our heroine, delighted to see how skillfully she had paved the way, now burst into a flood of tears, and implored the duke excitedly to befriend her—to save her from a vile or drunken husband, or from a wily, cruel priest.

‘God!’ she exclaimed, with religious fervour, ‘has raised you up to be my

deliverer ! Do not, oh ! do not forsake me !'

As she spoke these words, she looked so beautiful, so trusting, that the duke regretted the days of chivalry being utterly fled, and whispered to himself that he was a craven, and no true knight for feeling (as he undoubtedly did) thoroughly taken aback by this sudden cry for help from a lovely female in distress, and by the seriousness of the dilemma into which he had unwittingly thrust himself.

Meanwhile Dorinda wept copiously, and, being touched to the heart by her apparent helplessness, the old duke first tried to soothe her,—by kind words—and sundry paternal pattings ; but Dorinda did not care for them, they were of no permanent

use,—so he patted in vain,—the girl still wept on ! At last he could bear it no longer, and more generously than cautiously, promised ‘as far as he could,’ and ‘if she would only leave off crying,’ to be her protector, and ‘see what could be done.’

Dorinda was charmed, and gradually ceased to sob, feeling sure that, after going so far, the duke would not retract, and that, at least, his friendship was secured.

Truth to tell, however, the old man was perplexed,—not to say alarmed,—for he had no wish to embroil himself with Dorinda’s relations (however cruel they might be) ; and yet he was aware he had pledged himself to *something*, he knew not precisely to *what* ! Dorinda, on the other hand, knew

perfectly *her* intentions upon the subject, and set herself to the task of enlightening him; and after a long conversation under the sweet rose-bushes, during which she brought every fascination she possessed to bear upon her hearer, the duke conceived (or thought he did) a solution of all difficulties; but I need hardly say, this same solution had been foreseen and aimed at, by the astute Dorinda, very early in the interview; indeed she had all along been steering her somewhat battered bark (freighted with what weighty hopes and fears, she alone knew!) towards the haven of safety (the said haven in this instance being Brandon Castle), while the innocent old duke suffered himself to be bound hand and foot

by her wiles, and lay (metaphorically speaking) utterly at her mercy at the bottom of the boat!





CHAPTER VII.

‘ Arise, and get thee forth and seek
A friendship for the years to come.’



AS Dorinda and her companion emerged from the bower, she had the satisfaction of knowing that the duke was completely won over ; but she trembled when she thought of the duchess ! She was totally unacquainted with her,—had never scarcely heard her mentioned,—so her heart sank within her.

‘ Shall I have another battle to fight to win *her* over ? and shall I be as successful with *her* as with *him* ? Hardly ! Men I can generally manage, but women——’

She need not, however, have been uneasy on that score, for the duke presented her at once to his wife.

‘ She *is* the woman with the large nose after all !’ said Dorinda to herself, ‘ and she looks like an old witch waiting to fly away upon her broomstick ! I wish it would come, and deposit her with the cherubims, and leave me to marry the duke !’

The duchess was quite as kind-hearted as her husband, and became at once deeply interested in the girl’s sad history, especially when, after a long confidential con-

versation, Dorinda casually but firmly expressed a strong wish 'to forsake the errors of Rome.'

Of course this pleased the duchess, but she was of a more cautious nature than the duke, and was scarcely prepared to agree to the very prompt measures which her spouse seemed inclined to adopt, concerning his newly-discovered *protégée*, and which he communicated to his wife during their return home from the Breakfast.

'Bring her to Brandon Castle!' exclaimed the astonished lady. 'Why, we hardly know her!'

'Well—well,' argued the good-natured duke, 'Brandon is large enough, she need not interfere with you; and, if we only invite her for a short time, we

may save her from being wickedly sacrificed to an old *roué* or to a drunken young vagabond!—besides, we may make a Protestant of her,—she loathes the priests.’

The deliberation between the husband and wife was long, and a whole fortnight elapsed (a time of deadly anxiety to Dorinda, who knew exactly what was pending) before the duchess was quite won over, and the *modus operandi* decided upon. At last it was settled that the duchess must write to Lady Balbirnie; and, to the truthful old lady, this in itself was a difficulty.

‘I don’t know Lady Balbirnie,’ she objected, ‘and, hearing all I have about her, how can I write to her—as to a good

mother? besides, it is so odd to ask the girl without the mother!

‘ My dear, for the poor girl’s sake, we must waive ceremony, and do what we otherwise would not.’

So the following letter was dispatched :

‘ DEAR LADY BALBIRNIE,

‘ I scarcely know how to word this letter, not having the advantage of your acquaintance ; besides, my request is an odd one. We had the pleasure, a fortnight ago, of meeting your daughter Dorinda at Lady Basingstoke’s ; and the duke (as well as myself) was much struck by her beauty and charming manner, and with much diffidence I venture to ask if you will allow her to come and stay with

us at Brandon Castle, for a long or short period (according to the pleasure she may or may not experience in our midst). We are childless, and, if you will lend us Dorinda for awhile, she shall be cared for by us as a daughter. Should she become home-sick and anxious to return to the original nest, her wishes on this point as well as upon every other shall be furthered by us.

‘ May I also beg that while she is with us, she may be allowed to look to us for *everything*, exactly as though she were our own dear child, and that you will not consider our wish in this respect in bad taste.

‘ Once more apologising for a request which we trust you will look upon as the

freak of two old people who are devoted to young ones,

‘ Believe me, &c., &c.,

‘ M. CHEVIOTDALE.

‘ P.S.—There is no Roman Catholic place of worship near us. May Dorinda attend our church, and be present at our household prayers ?’

The receipt of this letter (in spite of the first few words recorded in her answer below) was no surprise to Lady Balbirnie, for, on Dorinda’s return from Lady Basingstoke’s, she had told her mother of the coming invitation ; but as days passed, and no tidings came from the Cheviotdales, Lady Balbirnie began to suspect Dorinda’s

truth, and was on the eve (in conjunction with the Catholic priest, who was no myth, no invention of Dorinda's fertile brain, but a stern reality) of taking some very decided measures to rid herself for good and all of her dangerous daughter, when the long-expected invitation arrived, to which the following answer was returned:

‘ MY DEAR DUCHESS,

‘ Your letter, I confess, surprised me, but your kind expressions about our Dorinda (who, to tell you the truth, we were about to send to a convent, in hopes that she might develop a vocation for a holy life) touched us both, and we feel it would not be right to refuse so

advantageous an offer, so flatteringly expressed. We therefore accept it with pleasure, only stipulating that if we should find ourselves too utterly wretched without her, you will allow us to call our beloved child back. With kindest regards both to you and the duke, &c., &c.,

‘C. BALBIRNIE.

‘P.S.—We are not bigots, and have always given religious latitude to Dorinda.’

Such was the parental letter to the duchess, but the parental remarks upon the subject, were couched in vastly different terms.

Calling her daughter into her room, as soon as she had read the letter, Lady Balbirnie addressed her thus :

‘ You have made a good stroke of business, Dorinda, but through how many lies and inventions you have waded to gain your end, I know not, and care less. One thing, however, I impress upon you—namely, that, if through any folly or misbehaviour you get again turned out of your home, (for your home, mind, I mean it to be for some time to come), you won’t be received into the “original nest,” (with a sneer,) ‘ again. You are twenty-one in a few months, and your own mistress——’

‘ Not your fault I am not somebody else’s!’ muttered Dorinda, between her teeth.

‘ —Therefore,’ continued Lady Balbirnie, as though she had not heard the interruption, ‘ pray don’t forget that this house

will no longer be your home then, and——’

‘No!’ burst out Dorinda, now fairly roused, ‘nor shall I forget in a hurry what a “home” your house has ever been to me; nor what you threatened me with, the day of the Basingstoke Breakfast, (where I so luckily met that good-natured, silly old duke) —namely, that, unless I returned that day the affianced wife of either that old reprobate Lord Vanbrugh, or of that drunken Sir Charles (you didn’t care which) I should be shipped off to some foreign land, (you didn’t care where,) with—you didn’t care whom.’

‘I advised Father Andrew,’ interrupted Lady Balbirnie.

‘—To make my fortune,’ continued Dorinda, in a towering rage, ‘you didn’t care how!’

‘Well, well,’ calmly returned Lady Balbirnie, ‘until you met your “silly old duke,” you were almost as eager as I was to catch either the “old reprobate” or the “drunken Sir Charles”; but when I saw you hesitate—neither aspirant being rich enough to please you,—I, being resolved you should be settled, only hurried matters on a little. Besides,’ added the lady, with a steady gaze at her excited daughter, ‘when you talk of my “shipping you off I didn’t care where,” you would do well to remember that you might one day be “shipped off,” (as you elegantly term it,) by others,—not at my expense; and even

now, Dorinda, if Miss Woodcock chose—'

'Hush, mother!' exclaimed Dorinda, turning deadly pale, and no longer defiant. 'For God's sake, hush!—and oh! mother, let bygones be bygones!'

'So be it,' answered Lady Balbirnie, quietly; 'it is better so for all parties. So farewell, Dorinda, for to-morrow I am off again to Homburg. May good luck attend you!—but, remember, I think it a pity you have given up your chances of marriage—for an uncertainty, (as a visit to the duke's is only an uncertainty after all, and you can't tell what, or if anything, will turn up); but anyhow, "*faites votre jeu*" sensibly this time, for remember, *I will not have you home again.*'

With these words Lady Balbirnie, after

coldly touching her daughter's forehead with her lips, left the room, and for a moment Dorinda looked wistfully after her; for her beautiful, stern, hard mother had been to her one of those 'might have beens' which sometimes cross one's path through life. As a child, Dorinda might have loved her mother—would have loved her, had she ever remembered a fond kiss, or a tender caress; but no such memories hallowed her childhood, harsh words, callous neglect, had been her portion, and once—ah! once, she remembered being soundly whipped for having told an inconvenient truth! Still—still, as her mother passed from the room, and out of her life (for she never lived beneath the parental roof again), she felt as though a

cold, horny hand had suddenly tightened round her heart, and for once she thoroughly broke down,—and laying her folded arms and aching head upon the nearest table, she wept, bitter, scalding tears,—such as she never wept again !

Thinking that she heard some one approaching, she hastily rose, and ran up into her own room, and for some hours afterwards she might have been heard opening and tearing up letters ; and a few days later, when she quitted her girlhood's chamber for ever, she left no traces behind her—only a heap of smouldering ashes !—ashes of crushed—burnt-up hopes,—as well as of letters !

Oh ! happy, happy the woman without a Past !



CHAPTER VIII.

‘Oh, Time! Thou must untangle this—not I!
It is too hard a knot for me to untie.’

DORINDA'S preparations for leaving home did not take long, and before many days had elapsed, she found herself installed at Brandon Castle, surrounded by love and luxury; but her sudden appearance in the midst of the Cheviotdale relations and household, caused much dissatisfaction,

especially when, in consequence of sundry words dropped by her Grace's confidential maid, it was reported, that the young lady's visit was likely to be a long one, and perhaps 'a permanency.' At this news a regular mutiny broke out both above and below stairs. With the belligerents below we need not trouble ourselves; suffice it to say that they were mostly old retainers of the family, who, anxious (we may suppose) to prove their loyalty to their employers, and their gratitude for half-a-century's board, lodging, and kindness, set about it by either insolently ignoring, or secretly wounding the very individual whom their master and mistress delighted to honour; but Dorinda had learnt by bitter experience how to deal with servants, and generally by love

or money came off victorious, as far as they were concerned. She was, however, scarcely prepared for the undeniably unpleasant fact that above stairs the society had divided itself into two *cliques*. The 'Dorinda,' and the 'Anti-Dorinda.' The former was headed (all unconsciously) by the good duke and duchess, who, in their noble-heartedness and liberality, were above seeing, or even suspecting a want of hospitality in others; more especially among their own relations. The latter *clique* was headed (very consciously) by two individuals who, having for years resided when, and as often as they pleased (which was generally all the year round) at Brandon Castle, considered Dorinda's advent as an unwar-

rantable liberty, and a crying injury to themselves. These two wronged persons were Lady Margaret Saville, the duchess's niece, and Sir Guy Deveril, the duke's nephew.

Lady Margaret was, as we know, the young lady who succeeded Dorinda at the Misses Woodcock's establishment; and, although ignorant of the story about the cheque, was perfectly cognisant, from hearsay, of the other awkward incident about the gold thimble; but, having been bound solemnly to secrecy by the three kind old ladies, she nobly kept her faith, hiding the secret from her nearest and dearest to the end.

Dorinda—whose nature could not have understood the existence of an indi-

vidual too grand and too proud to take advantage of even an enemy in its power ; nor, of a character to whom the breaking of a promise would be an impossibility,—soon decided in her own mind that Margaret could know nothing of her antecedents, or that she would have betrayed them ; and yet—yet Margaret's dignified reserve, and evident dislike to her, chafed, offended, and sometimes alarmed her.

Sir Guy also seemed to avoid her, but Dorinda was quick enough to perceive very soon that the cousins made common cause against her, as an interloper, because their interests were identical ; for though, in consequence of insufficiency of means, it was not public-

ly confessed, still it was generally known and silently acknowledged that some day Guy and Margaret meant to marry.

Dorinda at first did all she could to ingratiate herself with the lovers; but, finding this impossible, she gave in to the necessity,—but she neither forgave nor forgot the repulse.

After a few weeks the cousins perceived, to their consternation, that Dorinda's popularity with the duke and duchess equalled,—if it did not surpass,—their own; and they foolishly attacked them upon the subject.

‘I don't like her, Uncle Chevy,’ said Margaret, ‘for she is mean, underhand, untruthful!’ (‘I may say so far to

warn them, without breaking my faith,' she thought.)

'Nay, nay!' answered the old man, gently. 'You judge her harshly. She has had bad parents. I know her story—you do not.' (Here Margaret's lip curled.) 'Besides, she is so beautiful,—unhappy and defenceless too! I promised to be her knight, poor soul! and she loves me as a father.'

'And so do I! dear—dear Uncle Chevy!' said Margaret, tears springing to her eyes, and kissing him fondly.

'Yes, dear, I know you do; but you are one of the family! She has no one but myself and your aunt.'

Deeply hurt, Margaret said no more.

‘She is mischief-making, false, and she reeks of scent!’ said Sir Guy, who had been hitherto the sole arbiter of matters of taste at Brandon Castle.

‘But she is clever, and so amusing!’ answered the duchess; ‘then she is so graceful, and devoted to the duke; besides she loves me like her mother!’ (the duchess forgot that, in Dorinda’s case, this was rather a doubtful compliment).

So Margaret and Guy retreated from the combat, worsted and chagrined; but they stood by, watching events, and ready to pounce upon their hated rival at a moment’s notice.

In the meantime the fair cause of these heart-burnings floated gracefully about the rooms and galleries of Brandon Castle,

apparently quite unconscious of the passionate emotions which her presence daily evoked.

She sat coaxingly on the ground at the duke's feet,—she carried the duchess's work-basket,—she sang like a bird,—danced like a fairy,—dressed with studied, almost bold simplicity,—and always wore a smile. She had, however, two peculiarities which impressed people disagreeably, even superstitiously! One was that instead of walking like a mortal, she glided like a phantom, and was constantly appearing noiselessly and unexpectedly; and as she moved, her body possessed a strangely graceful, undulating movement, which struck lookers-on more, in consequence of her habitually wearing (as her only orna-

ment) an ancient, green enamel girdle, set with stones of all colours, which glittered unceasingly with every movement, reminding all beholders of a beautiful but dangerous serpent !

The other peculiarity was in her hands. Although they were perfect in beauty, as to size, shape, and colour, the slender finger-tips curled most curiously inwards, giving the hand a cruel, claw-like expression. (I use the word 'expression' advisedly, for nothing is so full of expression as a person's hand!)

Dorinda, we may suppose, cannot altogether have objected to the words, 'weird' and 'uncanny' being used concerning her and her two peculiarities, for she had often been laughingly told of

them ; and yet had never tried to modify them ; on the contrary, as concerned her hands, she must have been pleased at the effect produced, for she wore her little pink nails much longer than necessary, and carefully trained each into a point, which did not lessen the claw-like illusion.

Months rolled by, and Dorinda's influence at Brandon was still on the increase, while poor Margaret was constantly finding herself 'out in the cold;' and to add to her exasperation, she could not but notice that the male relations and friends of the family, (not excepting her own beautiful Guy!) were becoming daily less bitter against Dorinda, less ready to pick holes in her clothes and manners.

‘What chance have I or indeed has any one—’ said she ruefully to herself one evening, as she was pacing up the statue gallery,—alone; (she was always alone now, brooding over her half-formed, scarcely-expressed fears)—‘against her, with her wriggling body—and her cruel—cruel claws! She is like the Vampires one reads of! enchanted, and (oh! I know it too well!) *enchanting!* Oh, why—why did I pass my word not to speak,—not to tell my good aunt, my kind foolish old uncle! I will write and asked to be absolved from my promise; for I hate her! I hate her! and alas! I dread her too!’

As these bitter words escaped her lips, Margaret chanced to cast her eyes to the farther end of the darkening gallery, and

she perceived Dorinda lounging, with a grace peculiarly her own, upon a seat in the deep embrasure of one of the mullioned windows ;—nor was she alone, for sitting, nay, cast at her feet, was—who ? Margaret's own betrothed—Guy Deveril !

For a moment Margaret stood motionless,—gasping for breath ; then she beheld him,—her Guy !—tenderly lift the edge of Dorinda's snowy garment, and passionately kiss it !—then raising himself on his knees before her, till his head was on a level with hers,—he hastily said some eager words, and leaning forward, cast his arm round her, and would have pressed his perfidious lips to hers !—but that kiss was never given, never received, for Margaret could not, would not wait to see more, but

quick as a vengeful flash of forked lightning, she dashed between her discomfited lover and his false companion, uttering as she did so a bitter wailing cry, such as alone could be wrung from a wounded, outraged woman.





CHAPTER IX.

'This weak impress is as a figure,
Trenchèd in ice, which, with an hour's heat,
Dissolves to water, and doth lose his form.'

BUY'S confusion was great ; but Dorinda, who had probably seen Margaret all along, looked the picture of innocent surprise, and enquired 'the cause of Margaret's excitement ?'

Margaret drew herself up to her full

height, and said with stinging emphasis, as she gazed contemptuously at her rival :

‘I did not know you stole lovers, as well as—other things.’

Dorinda’s heart stopped for a moment, and she turned marble white ; but recovering herself quickly, she said simply,

‘From whom have I stolen Sir Guy?’

‘From me!’ wept the enraged Margaret. ‘He is—or rather’ (with beautiful scorn) ‘he was—my betrothed!’

Dorinda seemed amazed.

‘Is this true, Guy?’ she said. ‘You told me’ (with a glance at Margaret, to see the shaft strike home) ‘that *some time ago* you had had a *foolish entanglement* with Margaret—but that it had *all been*

on her side, and had long come to an end ; for it had never been serious with you, but only pour s'amuser—and that you had never loved anyone' (weeping gently) 'but poor Dorinda!' ('As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb,' thought she; 'and if Margaret really knows about me,—which her words seem to imply,—she will have no mercy now, but will split upon me, and I shall be kicked out to a certainty; but I shall, at all events, have the satisfaction of knowing that I have punished them for their treatment of me! It will be some time, I take it, before she believes anything he says to her again!')

Guy was struck dumb at the tissue of lies, shot with truth, which had issued so glibly from Dorinda's lips concerning

him and his words to her, and for the moment he felt quite unable to defend himself. Fickle,—contemptible,—weak,—he felt he had been; but designing—never! Nor had he held Margaret's love cheap, or ever mentioned her but with the deepest respect; but he had been fascinated, enslaved by Dorinda's enticing ways, and latterly, while in her presence, he had cared for, seen, felt nothing but the glance of her eye, the magic of her touch; while she, having but one object in view—namely, sweet revenge for the cousins' first reception of her at Brandon, lured him on and on to the catastrophe.

So the unfortunate swain stood silent, looking so mean, so wretched, so amazed at the turn things had taken, and at

Dorinda's impudent assertions—which were so impossible to disprove,—that that young lady, having a strong sense of the ridiculous, would have laughed, had she dared; but Guy, seeing the agony depicted in Margaret's face, groaned within himself, while his old admiration for her, and strong contempt for her lying rival, tortured his agitated breast. At last he plucked up courage to say :

‘Margaret, believe me, I never mentioned our engagement to her—at all!’

‘No! you called it an “entanglement,”’ murmured Dorinda.

‘I did not!’ passionately declared Guy; then, turning to Margaret, he added, imploringly, ‘Margaret, as God lives, I did not say—what she says I did!’

Then the poor wretch began floundering hopelessly in the net so skilfully laid, trying in vain to explain what he had said, and not meant; what he had meant, and not said; what he had neither meant nor said; and what he had both said and meant, that Margaret's contempt broke loose.

‘Oh!’ she said, angrily, ‘cease your explanations! I want none of them. It is all over now. But as for *her*’ (contemptuously) ‘she is——’

Our heroine, thinking it wiser not to wait for her rival's diagnosis of her character, sprang past the cousins, in order to repair without delay to the duke's apartments (where she was ever a welcome guest), determined he should hear her

version of the story first ; but, as she sped through the galleries, her feelings were far from enviable.

‘ I should never have ventured on this *coup*,’ she thought, ‘ only I imagined, from Margaret’s complete silence all this time, that she knew nothing against me ; but I suppose, from her words just now, that the Woodcocks betrayed me to her. If she really knows all, I am done for now, for she will tell the duke. Heigho ! it is hardly any use my going to him now, I fear ; but I may as well, for if I am to be kicked out, one lie more or less won’t signify ; while, on the other hand, if her words were only a chance hit, it will be an object for me to get the first word with the old man. So here goes ! But ’

—stopping for a moment and putting her hand up to her head—‘if I *am* kicked out, what then—ay, what then? . . . Psha! “a Stratton and afeard!”’

She laughed lightly, and, hurrying on to the old duke’s sitting-room, knocked and entered, finding him alone; and for the second time she weepingly poured her troubles into his kind and willing ear, telling her artless tale of love and sorrow so pathetically, that it never entered the loyal old gentleman’s head to doubt the truth of her guileless ignorance of the relations between Guy and Margaret.

‘Dear Uncle Chevy’—for by that endearing name she had learnt to call him, much to Margaret’s exasperation—‘if only they had told me of their

engagement, what sorrow they would have spared themselves and me! But Margaret would not speak to me; she did not like poor me! and she did not like your loving me! Dear, dear Uncle Chevy, I have no friend but you in the world; and she thinks I stole Guy from her, but I did not know—indeed I did not.'

'Guy alone is to blame,' said the duke, severely, 'for he has not only acted faithlessly to Margaret, but he has heartlessly trifled with your girlish affections.'

He then sent for Margaret, and blamed her very gently for her 'unjust anger against Dorinda, who was,' he assured her, 'totally ignorant of her engagement to Guy.' Then, with infinite tenderness,

he took his niece in his kind arms, and told her she had been scandalously cheated, and added angrily,

‘ When cooler, I shall have much to say to Guy, for he—he only is to blame. Dorinda is innocent !’

Here Dorinda, choked by appropriate sobs, buried her face in her hands ; and, when the duke had finished speaking, she waited breathlessly for Margaret’s answer, dreading, expecting her to come forward and denounce her ;—but she was silent !

After a moment, Dorinda ventured to look up. Margaret was standing motionless, pale, proud, and tearless,—like a statue of Despair ; but she said—nothing, and turned, as if to go.

Dorinda was inwardly jubilant.

‘ Her words,’ she thought, ‘ were, after all, a chance hit ; she knows nothing.’

There was now an awkward pause, nobody spoke, and our heroine, feeling convinced that the duke had completely exonerated her of all blame, considered it incumbent on her to assume the air of an injured and suffering saint ; so, melting into tender tears, she announced (between little gasps of emotion) her generous and complete forgiveness of everybody ; of Guy, ‘ although ’ (she said) ‘ he has made me love him, and broken my heart ;’ and of Margaret, ‘ who has said cruel bitter things against me.’ And she would actually have proved the sincerity of the said forgiveness, by offering to kiss Margaret ; but, when she approached that dignified

lady for the purpose, there was an expression in her eyes which made Dorinda suddenly change her mind, and retreat.

‘I believe she would have bitten me,’ she thought, ‘and I fancy I heard her mutter, “Judas.” What an unpleasant, bitter young woman!’

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In a few days, peace seemed once more to reign at Brandon, but everything had changed. Guy had been banished to foreign parts, and all the house missed his handsome face and cheery voice. Dorinda glided about, looking pale and sad, with her head bent like a crushed flower, and was often discovered weeping in the gallery beneath the mullioned

window; but Margaret—poor Margaret! she too was pale, but with proudly erect head, and dry burning eyes. With all her heart she still loved Guy, but there was an impassable gulf now between them—the gulf of a lie! To her mind, Dorinda was but a very secondary ill.

‘She is too contemptible far,’ she said to herself, ‘for me to care to injure her. Poor wretch! Why should I? She has caused the fall of the prop I should have clung to all my life, and she can hurt me no further. I should be like her, were I to seek a mean revenge; besides, my word was passed to those three kind old ladies, as theirs was to Lady Balbirnie. I thank God I never yielded to the temptation of

denouncing her. After all, she is more to be pitied than I; and, as long as she does no harm to the dear old duke and duchess, I will leave her alone. God will take the poor thing in hand, in His own good time! But Guy—oh, Guy!’ the poor girl would exclaim in an agony of grief, as she passionately cast herself upon her couch, where there were no cruel eyes to see, no sneering lip to mock, ‘it is a bereavement to me,—a death,—the death of Faith in my heart!’

As for the duke and duchess, after the first excitement was over, and upon calm reflection, they experienced a curiously uncomfortable sensation about the part Dorinda had acted in the transaction! To them both, it seemed strange that a

clever girl as she was, should have been so blind,—so dull,—as not to have ‘taken in’ the fact of Guy’s engagement to Margaret! or at all events it was odd she should not have heard it mentioned! But they did not confess their thoughts even to each other,—these two kind old people, and, to use a vulgar though expressive simile, ‘it left a bad taste in their mouths.’





CHAPTER X

‘I have unclasped
To thee the book even of my secret soul!’

‘Fie! what a spendthrift is she of her tongue!’

WEEDS had now rolled smoothly by at Brandon Castle, and the inmates were beginning to accustom themselves to the (since Sir Guy Deveril's departure) decidedly dull monotony of their lives, when a most mysterious occurrence took place, which, in spite of

its being 'hushed up' as much as possible, loosened people's tongues, and raised their curiosity to the highest pitch.

The duke and duchess had one night retired to rest as usual, and had already for some hours been sleeping the sleep of the just, when their innocent slumbers were disturbed by—an apparition! A fair girl, clad in a purely white, clinging, semi-transparent robe, with a wealth of rippling hair falling to, and nearly covering her naked feet, appeared—standing motionless—at the foot of the bed. The beautiful eyes were wide open (when were they *not*?), and wore the far-off gaze of the somnambulist,—a gaze which seemed to pierce through and through the couch

upon which lay the terrified and trembling old couple.

Dorinda,—for it was she,—carried a small silver lamp, and, slowly approaching the side of the bed devoted to the duke, sat noiselessly down. The duke and duchess breathed more freely as they gathered from their visitor's attitude and demeanour, that she had no murderous intentions; and they listened with breathless attention as, with an utterance—sleepily indistinct,—though articulate enough for her amazed hearers to comprehend the gist of her words, the lovely sleeper murmured forth her astounding revelations.

At first she seemed passionately pleading for justice from 'papa,' 'mamma,' and 'Father Andrew;' and then, by means of

spasmodic, but suggestive words, she proceeded to reveal awful social secrets ; implicating the characters of most respectable and hitherto respected personages ; she whispered terrible reasons why some well-known, middle-aged married couples should in common decency live apart ; she linked names better separate, and finally she sobbed forth harrowing sentences, disclosing some particulars of her own private history, by which she proved herself a person of unerring virtue,—labouring under unheard-of difficulties ! Meanwhile she interlarded her mysterious confidences with such vehement expressions of adoration for the duke, that the poor duchess dissolved into tears, while her spouse looked on in mute admiration, tempered by just a

grain of suspicion, and a nervous dread lest the lamp should set fire to the bed-clothes !

At last the sleepily-melodious voice ceased, and, rising dreamily from her seat, Dorinda set down the lamp, and, to the duke's speechless terror, seemed rather uncertain as to whether she were not *chez-elle*,—whether, in short,—she should not invade the nuptial couch ! Such a catastrophe, however, was mercifully averted ; for, apparently changing her mind, the lovely somnambulist once more appropriated the lamp, and, with a deep sigh, glided from the room.

‘ Follow her, duke, pray ! ’ exclaimed the duchess ; ‘ make haste too, or she will injure herself ! ’

‘ My dear, ’ pleaded the duke, ‘ I really

can't. Suppose some of our people were to see me running after her—in this attire?’

‘True,’ said the kind duchess, ‘I had better go.’

‘No,’ said the duke, shortly, ‘she came safely, and will return so; somnambulists rarely hurt themselves. Let’s go to sleep!’

They lay down quietly for a moment; then the duke said, suspiciously,

‘My dear, was she really asleep?’

‘Dear husband, can you doubt it?’

‘Well, well,’ answered the old man, rather ashamed of himself and of his thoughts; ‘and oh! didn’t she look lovely!’

‘Only fancy,’ said the duchess, ‘if she had gone into anybody else’s room!’

Finally they agreed that profound silence had better be maintained concerning this strange nocturnal adventure.

The next morning Dorinda appeared at breakfast—later than usual, looking pale and ill, and with her arm in a sling; and she related, with much innocence, how she had been discovered by her maid, in a faint upon the ground, at the foot of the bed; ‘and with the pretty silver lamp,’ she added, tearfully, ‘which you, Uncle Chevy, gave me, overturned and broken by my side!’

Upon Margaret cross-questioning her as to how the accident could have occurred, she answered she was an inveterate sleep-walker, and had been so all her life, and that she supposed she must have ‘walked’

last night and have fallen over something in her room.

The duke and duchess were silent; but Margaret's curiosity was roused, and she remarked :

‘Surely such a fall as you describe would have awoken you ! and yet you say that hours after,—when, I presume, she called you in the morning,—your maid discovered you on the ground, not, I suppose, in a faint, but still asleep.’

‘Pardon me,’ answered Dorinda, quietly, ‘I did not say “hours after.” You misunderstood me. My maid, who sleeps in my dressing-room, heard the fall, and came in at once, finding me not “asleep,” but fainting,—or “unconscious” would perhaps be a better word, for I

evidently had struck my temple badly, which, I suppose, stunned me ;' and pushing aside her fair hair, a black, ugly-looking bruise was shown, discolouring the delicate skin, and evoking general sympathy.

For days after, our heroine, who had also bruised her arm and wrist, was obliged to beg that her food might be cut up for her ; and she positively refused to eat,—unless the duke performed the office himself ! To the annoyance of some, and the surprise of others, he laughingly complied ; and, as Margaret noted the incident, she was irresistibly reminded of the wise man's speech in the Apocrypha :

‘ Yea, many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become servants for their sakes.

‘ Many also have perished, have erred, have sinned for women, and

‘ Now, do ye not believe me ?

‘ Is not the King great in his power, do not all regions fear to touch him ?

‘ Yet did I see him, and Apame, the King’s concubine, sitting at the right hand of the King, and taking the crown from the King’s head, and setting it upon her own head ! She also struck the King with her left hand ! and yet, for all this, the King gaped and gazed upon her with open mouth ! If she laughed upon him, he laughed also, but if she took any displea-

sure at him, the King was fain to flatter, that she might be reconciled to him again.'

And forthwith, in her heart, Margaret christened Dorinda 'Apame,' and ever after called her by that name.

It is difficult to understand, supposing this sleep-walking episode was a fraud,—a hoax—as of course it was!—what Dorinda's object could have been in venturing upon it; but, as she rarely did or said anything without a motive, she must have had a strong one to attempt anything so hazardous! To be sure, after Guy's departure, her life had been deadly dull and destitute of all excitement, which, to a woman of

her temperament, was unbearable; also, at times, she displayed a reckless, unhealthy delight in placing herself in difficult circumstances, from which she could only extricate herself by bringing all her wondrous powers of tact, energy, and lying into play.

Still, a deeper motive than either of these must have prompted her here; and probably the two following reasons may have done so: First, she may have thought it would be a good stroke of business if she could, without apparent malice, raise doubts in the duke's mind concerning the character and credibility of certain friends of his, who she fancied understood her, and were consequently dangerous.

Secondly, she may have said to herself:

‘ I will remind them that, even if they are angry with me about Guy, it would be impossible for them to deliver me over again to the tender mercies of my cruel parents and the priests ; and the only way to do this, would be to bring my home-troubles once more vividly before them, and rekindle in their hearts the pity which is akin to love.’

Thus with these thoughts uppermost, and having unbounded faith in her own ‘ wits,’ in the unsuspecting natures of her patrons, and in their utter ignorance in double-dealing, she probably conceived and carried out the daring plan ; but the game had been a dangerous one, and better left alone, for it awoke questionings in the duke’s mind, not so much as to the char-

acters of the individuals she had vilified—as to her own ! The slanders she had uttered in her fit of somnambulism had given him offence ; for, having a singularly pure mind himself, the very thought of a young girl wading through, or even having the knowledge of, what he called ‘filth’ disgusted him.

‘She could not have dreamt of things she did not know,’ he argued, during the long consultation that he and the duchess held upon the subject ; and, although it never entered their heads that they were the victims of a hoax, they were fast becoming aware that the custody of other people’s children, even when come to years of discretion, (or of *indiscretion*, as in Dorinda’s case), was no sinecure.

Not many days after this event, a new character appeared on the scene, totally changing the spirit of everybody's dream at Brandon.





CHAPTER XI.

A man of good repute, carriage, bearing, and reputation.

SHAKESPEARE.

IT was a lovely summer morning, and the breakfast had been prepared under the shade of the verandah. The duchess, Margaret, and Dorinda had already sat down to the meal, but the duke had not yet appeared.

‘Uncle Chevy is late !’ said Dorinda.

Margaret bit her lip, and said, with some emphasis : ‘Aunty, may I go and see after “the duke” ?’

‘Do, my dear, I can’t think what keeps him!’

‘I hope,’ Dorinda thought, ‘that he has not died suddenly! It is so like the sort of thing that would happen to me! so like my luck. I wonder what would happen to me!’

Margaret rose, and in a moment returned.

‘Aunty!’ she said, ‘he has had a letter from the Prince Bernard de la Styrie, saying he is coming here to-day!’

‘Who is he?’ said Dorinda, ‘I never heard of him.’

‘He is the duke’s oldest friend, dear,—but what does he say, Meg?’

‘He is in great sorrow, aunty, his young brother is dead—died suddenly!’

‘Oh, I am so sorry! He was his heir, and such a charming creature! Poor Prince Bernard! The duke is so fond

of him. He is enormously rich, and——’

‘Is the princess coming too?’ asked Dorinda.

‘There is no princess; he has never been married.’

The duke now came in; Dorinda jumped up and kissed him, and for a few minutes was very busy passing him his coffee, toast, eggs, &c.

‘Poor Bernard!’ said the duke at length, after his morning appetite had been tolerably satisfied; ‘we must try to comfort him. He feels his brother’s death terribly! His letter is so French! He says he must begin life afresh, for as his brother has died unmarried, unless he marries—himself, the family will become extinct.’

‘But he is an old man to marry,’ put in the duchess.

‘*Merci-chère !* he is ten years younger than I ! He is fifty-five, but handsome—and enormously rich, so he is sure to find some lady willing to undertake him. He claims my sympathy as his oldest friend, and begs he may be allowed to stay here for a while,—*sans cérémonie*,—and shut up in his own room. He writes : “*Donne moi, je te prie, mon cher ami, une toute petite chambre, qui donne sur ton joli jardin Anglais, et laisse-moi seul ! que je pleure mon Antoine, mon cher Antoine,*” &c., &c.’

‘He shall have the blue-room,’ said the kind duchess, ‘which looks out on the rose-garden,—when does he arrive ?’

‘To-day—he will be here very soon. I have sent the carriage, and I will receive him in my own den.’

Breakfast being over, the duchess ac-

accompanied the duke to his sitting-room to await and welcome their guest. Margaret prepared herself for a walk, intent upon carrying a small basket of gifts to some poor people ; and Dorinda sat down in her own bed-room to think.

‘They are giving him Guy’s room,’ said she. ‘I wonder whether he will end by watching for me in the rose-garden, as Guy used ! I wish he would, for I can’t live here for ever, and I must try to settle myself ! But Margaret, I fear, will suit him best, with her grand air and dignified beauty. What a perfect princess she would make ! and yet—yet’ (going up to the *cheval* glass and standing before it), ‘*Non c’e male !*’ as the Italians say.’

And indeed she was not far wrong—for what did she see in that mirror ? Let us

look ; a tall girl clad in some soft white material, which fitted closely to the beautifully-formed bust and rounded waist ; while, after the fashion of the day, the skirt was drawn back as tightly as possible from the front, accentuating rather than veiling the graceful form and the long slender limbs, and falling into a long train which swept the ground behind her. Her complexion was fair, almost pale, but the blush-rose colour which now and then deepened on her cheek was beautiful in the extreme. Her eyes were that peculiar tint seen only in blue steel, and they would have worn a hard expression, had they not been softened by heavy lids, and long curling lashes. Her nose was slightly aquiline, the nostrils being thin, sensitive, and proud ; and her mouth was beautiful,

being rounded at the corners ; while the lips were full.

As she scanned this vision in the mirror, she once more repeated,—and this time with a smile,—‘ *Non c’e male !*’ and, turning away gaily, rang the bell.

Estelle, who had been reinstated as soon as Dorinda’s fortunes had again risen, entered the room.

‘ My hat, Estelle—the large white one, with the roses,—now—my parasol and gloves, *merci, voilà tout !*’ and, selecting a book, she sauntered forth.

As the carriage containing the Prince de la Styrie drove up the avenue, he beheld a young girl sitting on the grass—reading. She seemed so absorbed in her book that she scarcely raised her head to look at the passer-by ; but when she did

so, the prince (unlike an Englishman, who would have taken no notice of the lady, but would have driven by looking and feeling uncomfortable) took off his hat with a flourish, as if he would have died in her service; and the lady bowed and smiled,—the prince meanwhile thinking he had never see anyone so beautiful.

The carriage passed on, but Dorinda sat long under the trees.

‘He is a grand-looking man,’ she thought, ‘and cannot be fifty-five!’

For about ten days the prince remained invisible, to ‘*pleurer*’ his brother. His host and hostess visited him now and then during his seclusion, but the young ladies saw him not. He, however, saw them,—or one of them,—for Dorinda (as was her wont) rose early every morning,

and, with a basket on her arm, hied her to the rose-garden, to pick roses ; it being her particular charge, to distribute them prettily over the rooms ; and she remarked (smiling inwardly) that one of the strands of the Venetian blinds in a particular window belonging to the ‘blue-room,’ was invariably turned soon after she had begun her quest among the rose-bushes, and she felt sure her movements were followed by curious and, probably, admiring eyes.

One morning, while Estelle was brushing her mistress’s hair, the foreign maiden said,

‘A ce qui paraît, monsieur le prince quitte sa chambre aujourd’hui.’

Dorinda continued reading.

‘Il dîne ce soir en famille.’

Silence from Dorinda.

‘A ce qui paraît il cherche une princesse, et à ce qu’on dit, il admire beaucoup les Anglaises !’

‘Taisez-vous donc ! Impertinente !’ said Dorinda, smiling.

The prince did, in fact, appear that evening, and at a glance Dorinda perceived that her search for roses, and her pretty attitudes, had not been thrown away. Indeed (although our heroine knew it not), the prince—having at once recognized in the pretty flower-girl the studious beauty of the Park ; and having watched her narrowly for two or three mornings,—had approached the duchess upon the subject, asking who she was ? &c., &c., and upon hearing that her family and descent were sufficiently aristocratic not to dis-

grace his own, and having much faith in the reputed characters for innocence of the traditional English 'mees,' he went to work in the French way, asking the duchess whether (supposing, upon further acquaintance, the lovely '*demoiselle aux roses*' did not object to him) he might become a candidate for her hand?

The duchess consulted the duke, and they wrote at once to Dorinda's parents, who declared themselves delighted at the prospect, (laying especial stress on the fact that the prince 'happily belonged to the Faith,') and consequently all was pre-arranged and *en train* before Dorinda had been spoken to upon the matter; for the duchess had said,

'Better let her judge for herself, with-

out the knowledge of any previous arrangement; and so she will act naturally and as her heart dictates. For myself, I have a horror of these *mariages de convenance*, I prefer old-fashioned love-making. I may be wrong!’

Thus it was decided that Dorinda should be arbiter of her own fate, and the very night of Estelle’s announcement, the prince was presented to *his*—in the form of a lovely, gentle-voiced, graceful young girl, who was prettily dressed, spoke French prettily, and ate and drank prettily (a most uncommon accomplishment); indeed, before the fish was off the table, the inflammable French soldier was as irrevocably and foolishly in love as any young man could be.



CHAPTER XII.

‘ My house within the City
Is richly furnished with plate and gold ;
My hangings all of Tyrian tapestry :
In ivory coffers I have stuffed my crowns.
Myself am struck in years, I must confess ;
And, if I die to-morrow, this is hers,
If, whilst I live, she will be only mine.’

DORINDA, of course, looked, and was, young enough to be the prince's daughter, but there was an air of dignity about her which charmed him ; and one day—when, in

consequence of an indisposition of the duchess's (Margaret being in attendance on her aunt), it fell to her lot (by the duke's desire) to receive and entertain some distinguished guests,—she acted the part of hostess with such calm and simple dignity, setting everyone so completely at their ease, that the prince could hardly contain his admiration, and decided to ask her to be his wife without delay ; so a day or two afterwards, to Dorinda's enormous satisfaction, he asked for an interview, and presented her with a magnificent bracelet, enhancing (as he thought) the value of the gift by telling her it had been his mother's property.

Our heroine, however, deemed it best not to appear too eager to understand his

intentions ; therefore, looking up at him in innocent amazement, she gently returned the jewel, saying,

‘ Prince, I am not worthy of such a gift.’

‘ Mademoiselle, nothing is good enough for you ; but, humble as the gift is, I value it for my mother’s sake, and, when I offer it, it is with the wild hope that you may be induced not only to accept it, but also to take my mother’s place as the *Princesse de la Styrie*.’

(‘ Oh, dear,’ thought Dorinda, ‘ what cold love-making !’)

‘ Mademoiselle,’ the prince continued, ‘ the moment I saw you I adored you ; but may I implore you to consider over my proposal ? Our ages are vastly differ-

ent, so if you accept me it will be a sacrifice on your side; but do not hastily refuse me, as my life shall be spent in trying to make you happy. Allow me to leave the bracelet in your keeping; and should you honour me, in a day or two, by allowing it to appear on your pretty arm, I shall know then that I am the happiest of men; but if—on consideration—you return it, through the duke, I shall leave the castle at once,—a desolate and heart-broken one.’ Then with a profound bow he left her.

‘How dreary!’ thought our heroine, ‘how dull! how cold! But beggars can’t be choosers, and, after all, I shall have what many would give anything to possess.’

Accordingly she acted in this, as in most

things, with great tact. She had foreseen this supreme moment for some time, and had calmly weighed the *pros* and *cons*, and, having come to the conclusion that it was a case (for her) of all *pros* and no *cons*, she was thoroughly prepared; consequently, with that engaging sincerity which stamped all her actions, directly the prince had left her, she flew to the duchess, telling her breathlessly what had occurred, and expressing her unbounded surprise at the proposal. She then displayed the bracelet, and implored the duchess's advice.

The kind old lady smiled, and advised her to consider over it for a day or two; (devoutly hoping she would accept the proposal;) and Dorinda did consider;—but not, as the duchess thought, over the

proposal only; no, her first thought was :

‘ Will Edward Julian try to injure me ? no, he said, *as long as I left his family alone, he would not meddle with me !* Heigho ! Poor Jasper ! I have no fear of *his* malice ! but what of Henrietta ? Oh, no ! *She* will be too pleased to have me safely married elsewhere ! The old Woodcocks would have split upon me before now, had they meant to do so ; and Margaret—ah ! She will be glad to be rid of me upon any terms ! so I suppose I am safe ; therefore, I shall accept.’

And, taking the bracelet out of its case, she clasped it round her arm, looking long and thoughtfully at it ; at last she murmured :

‘A fether! ay! but it will be one to him also! I wonder which will feel and fret at its weight first!’

In a day or two, she descended into the rose-garden, whither she had seen the prince repair shortly before, to smoke his cigar. Upon seeing her, he joined her eagerly, and after a few shy words, and with just the right amount of maidenly agitation and womanly dignity, she pushed aside her delicate lace sleeve, disclosing to the prince the bracelet, which lay flashing on her arm! The prince was overjoyed, and taking her hand kissed it, murmuring, ‘The happiest day of my life!’ Dorinda started, and remembered with a pang those words, ‘*Jour de ma vie!*’ but smothering all sentiment, with a happy

smile on her lip, and a proud step, she accompanied her betrothed back to the castle.

The duke and duchess were delighted at the marriage, thinking the prince would be a safe and kind protector to the worse than orphan girl ; and, as soon as Dorinda's acceptance of the prince was declared, the duchess wrote to Lord and Lady Balbirnie, saying, with words of much affection, that, as Dorinda had been so long their adopted child, they hoped to be permitted to look upon her in that light still—until they delivered her up to a husband's keeping. So they gave the *Corbeille de mariage*, and the wedding took place from Brandon Castle.

Lord and Lady Balbirnie were present,

as well as a host of everyone's relations, and Lady Balbirnie charmed them all by her beauty and *grande dame* manners; so much so, that the prince, with a courtly bow, as he kissed his *belle-mère's* hand, acknowledged it was easy to see whence his lovely Dorinda had derived her charm!

As the well-appointed chariot,—containing the bride and bridegroom, (drawn by four grey horses, ridden by the prince's French postillions, who wore the traditional old-world costume of his family,)—rolled from the door of the house which had been to her a kindly and liberal home, Dorinda looked up, and perceived Margaret's pale face, watching her without a smile (she rarely smiled now) from the

well-remembered mullioned window of the statue gallery.

‘She need not have chosen that very window,’ thought the hour-old princess, wincing slightly, as she waved an effusive adieu to the motionless figure which seemed scarcely to heed her sign ;—for Margaret could not,—did not wish Dorinda God-speed, and, with a tinge of malice aforethought, had deliberately selected that very spot from whence to witness the bride’s departure.

The carriage passes slowly down the avenue of stately trees, sweeps round the deep, blue lake—across the bridge ; then, entering a wood, vanishes—first from sight,—then from hearing.

Softly Margaret closes the casement and then—whispers her adieu.

‘Farewell, Apame!. The crown is on your head now; but will the king, do you think, gape and flatter for ever? We shall see, we shall see!’





CHAPTER XIII.

‘Meet is it changes should controul
Our being, lest we rust in ease.’

‘What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God.’

‘**D**EAREST mother, do let me
go! They have especially
invited me, and I should so
like to see St. Cloud, and that lovely old
queen! So kiss me, mother, and say
yes.’

‘My child, I am only afraid for your

chest ; and if you were to catch cold, and be laid-up here——’

‘ But, mother, I will wrap up. We must see the Horse-shoe waterfall by moonlight ! It would be too charming !’

‘ Well, darling, the weather is warm, so I won’t refuse ; but you must wear your fur cloak, and we will take Bardel with us.’

‘ Oh, poor, dear Bardel,’ laughed the girl, ‘ he is such a coward that he will faint when he sees the sentries at the palace !’

This conversation took place in an *entresol* of the Hotel Bristol in Paris, in September, 1847, between Lady Olive Ramsay and Iona, now a handsome, but delicate-looking girl between sixteen and seventeen.

After leaving Dresden, Iona had failed so alarmingly in health, that Olive had been advised to travel, and winter in Italy. Accordingly the two last winters had been spent in Naples, and Iona had so benefited from the warm climate, that it was decided she should go this year to London,—be presented, and, after a short,—very short season, return to, and spend one more winter in Italy, when it was hoped the girl would return perfectly cured.

During all the time of their travels Lady Olive had been accompanied by old Bardel, who, as we said before, had entered her service just before Mr. Ramsay's death at Pisa; and the fact of having seen the young and lovely

woman in such heart-broken distress, seemed to have awoke every feeling of chivalry in the Frenchman's heart. He accompanied the widow home, and had lived with her ever since, in any capacity most required at the moment. During Iona's illness, and in all the subsequent travellings, he had been the girl's best nurse, was a capital cook, housemaid, butler,—was now *courier*; and, although certainly guilty of the little failing laughingly alluded to by Iona, was Olive's devoted slave, and confidential friend, as only an old French man-servant of the *ancien régime* can be.

Lady Olive had arrived in Paris about a week ago, and had settled herself in the

Hotel Bristol for a fortnight. She had come for two principal reasons : one was—motherly vanity,—to get Iona's presentation gown ; and the other was—that she thirsted to see Dorinda happy, with a good husband and a luxurious home.

During her life at Kensington, in spite of her constant occupation in Iona's education, Olive had found time to see a good deal of Dorinda ; and, although by no means a stupid woman, was, as most men and women are at one time of their lives, blinded by an infatuation ; hers being for the lovely girl who she had first known—weeping over a miserable home,—and a cruel, heartless mother.

Olive had once or twice been warned

against Dorinda by 'true friends;' but her chivalrous nature rebelled against those who stabbed in the dark, *i.e.*, those who would warn and hint, and yet were too timorous to speak out! Under such circumstances Olive would passionately, —obstinately support her friend, and insensibly she felt all the more tenderly towards one who required her championship, and, indeed, who had once or twice been almost dependent upon it.

Besides all this, Olive believed herself to have been the girl's sole *confidante* during the most difficult events of her unhappy youth; and she consequently felt that *she* could understand Dorinda's difficulties, and find excuses for her behaviour which

the world—being ignorant of the real circumstances—could not.

(How differently good Lady Olive would have felt, had she been aware that Dorinda had only confided in her just as far as her own suspicious nature would allow; and that the true history of her school life, of her first lover, of Sir Jasper, and of the part she had played concerning Sir Guy at Brandon, had been so altered—and facts so suppressed—in the telling—that practically she was ignorant of the whole! She did not know this till long after!)

But to return to the Hotel Bristol. As we said before, Lady Olive had come to Paris, intending to stay a fortnight, but

‘*L’homme propose et Dieu dispose,*’ as we shall see in this case before long.

Lady Olive’s father had at one time been intimately associated with the Orleanist family, and they had always evinced the strongest affection for his daughter; consequently, whenever she visited Paris, she informed the Queen Marie Amèlie of her arrival; and to-day she had received a command to visit the Queen at St. Cloud that same evening; and, as the visit was to be a strictly private one, Iona, although only sixteen, and not yet ‘out,’ was especially mentioned in the invitation. Lady Olive, however, being still anxious about Iona’s health, had hesitated taking her out in the evening, but the weather being

warm and dry, besides not being proof against the child's coaxing entreaties, she was over-ruled, even to agreeing to the *détour* on the road to enable them to see the fountains in the *Parc*, and the famous Horseshoe waterfall by moonlight. Accordingly, soon after dinner, the two ladies started, and on entering the *Parc*, drove to a friendly group of trees, indicated by the coachman as being only a few yards distant from the waterfall; and after forbidding Bardel, who was lame, accompanying them, they alighted and wrapped themselves closely in their cloaks and hoods, devoutly hoping it would be too late for inconvenient passers-by, who they felt might naturally be astonished at their evening toilettes.

After a short walk they came upon the waterfall, and were fully repaid for any trouble they had taken, for the scene was enchanting; and the effect of the moon-beams shining through the falling water (making it resemble a shower of opals) was a 'thing of beauty' never to be forgotten! Alas! how few things in that kaleidoscopic country remain to be 'a joy for ever.' This very waterfall, however, chances to be amongst the few relics that escaped the heart-breaking destruction which long after overwhelmed pretty St. Cloud!

This mild escapade of Lady Olive and her daughter was not—as it turned out—one of unmingled pleasure; nor was it altogether unattended by unpleasant results,

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for a *sergent-de-ville* who was prowling about, and very much on the alert in consequence of the then threatening state of the political atmosphere, unfortunately caught sight of the two shrouded figures, and, his suspicions being aroused by the evident anxiety of the mysterious individuals to avoid attention, he attracted the notice of a brother *sergent*, and, warning him to watch the suspected parties, he proceeded to question the coachman, who assured him that the intentions of *ces dames* were innocent, and that they were ‘on their way to pay their respects to the royal family at the Château.’ The *sergent* was by no means reassured by this apparently unlikely story; and continued eyeing Bardel, who, at that awkward moment, in

his determination to avoid all discussion with an individual in a sword, did his best to appear as suspicious a character as possible ! for, as soon as he had seen the official approaching, he had opened the carriage door and dived into it, at the same time slouching his hat, and wrapping himself in a large brigand-looking cloak, so that, as far as regarded a sinister and demoniacal rascality of appearance, Mephistopheles himself would have been but a ' patch on him.'

Of course the *sergent-de-ville* had noticed Bardel's efforts to hide himself, as well as his excessive perturbation, so opening the carriage door he desired *ce monsieur* authoritatively to descend, which the poor wretch did, trembling like a jelly ; but as

he was far too nervous to answer questions, the *sergent* turned from him, and again cross-examined the Jehu, who told him the ladies had come to see the waterfall by moonlight,—luckily adding that they were Englishwomen. This latter announcement seemed to alter the whole aspect of affairs; for, with a shrug of ineffable contempt at such insular *bizarreries*, the *sergent* exclaimed,

‘Des Anglaises! pfui! Bi’n ’lors, tout se comprend!’ and, whistling to his *camarade*, who was in a state of blank amazement, not unmingled with admiration at the ladies’ toilettes (which they vainly tried to hide), the two Frenchmen plunged into the trees and disappeared.

Much amused, but rather frightened,

Lady Olive and Iona once more entered the carriage, and arrived without further adventure at their destination.

They were received at the principal entrance to the Château by a gentleman of the royal household, with whom they were acquainted, and who had promised to point out to them some of the historical pictures and treasures as they passed through the galleries, *salles*, &c., on their way to the royal presence.

On first entering the grand vestibule, they gazed with deep interest at the beautiful marble staircase leading to the apartments where so many famous men and women had been born, had lived, laughed, wept—and died; and so vividly did their images rise before their imagina-

tion that the ghosts of their departed footsteps seemed to accompany their own.

Up that same staircase, on a sultry August morning, in the year 1589, a cowled monk* must have ascended; and in consequence, no doubt, of his holy calling and supposed sanctity of life, was permitted to approach his sovereign,† even into the intimacy of his bed-chamber. A few words were spoken,—a petition offered and graciously accepted,—but suddenly a gleaming knife was raised, and instantly plunged into the monarch's bosom! There was a short but deadly struggle, the king fought right royally for his life, blood

* Jacques Clements.

† Henri III. of France.

flowed on both sides, and the king killed his assailant ; but in a very few hours he also succumbed to his wounds, and thus the proud House of Valois passed away for ever !

Then also Henrietta Maria's weary feet must have ascended and descended those steps scores of times, for in those upper rooms she sadly lived and sadly died, after having—years before—forsaken Charles Stuart, her king and husband, in his bitter need.

But these phantoms had presently to be banished from their minds, for the two ladies were quickly conducted through the *Salles de Mars* and *de Venus*, noticing in the former, as they hurried by, the famous statue of the Grand Monarque.

‘Great,’ said Lady Olive, ‘in nothing but his vices and selfishness, and in the retribution which his wickedness brought upon heads as sacred as his own, and far more innocent.’

Iona would willingly have lingered in the apartment which had served (strange irony of fate!) as a bed-chamber to Marie-Antoinette, Josephine, and Marie Louise, but their conductor warned them that they must now emerge from the world of shadows,—bid farewell to dead kings and queens,—to enter the presence of living Majesty; and, with a courteous bow, he pointed to the door of another *salon*, upon entering which, they found themselves face to face with the benignant Queen Marie Amèlie, who was sitting upon a beautiful gilt sofa,

drawn up to a large round table, at which several ladies were sitting, engaged in needlework.






CHAPTER XIV.

'O! gentle spirit! thou didst bear unmoved
Blasts of adversity, and frosts of fate.'

'Grave in his aspect and attire,
A man of ancient pedigree.'

 HE Queen rose as Lady Olive approached, and, after kissing her and Iona affectionately, presented both to each of the ladies present; then, inviting Lady Olive to sit by her on the sofa, Iona took her place by the lovely Duchesse de Nemours, who with

her sweet face (shaded by long fair curls) and her gentle manner, soon set the girl at her ease.

Iona was much interested at beholding the aged Princesse Adèlaide ; also the Duchesse de Montpensier, who had for so long been the political bone of contention ; and the whole situation was (to her) like an extravagant dream !—seeing all these celebrities sitting at a round-table, working slippers, braces &c., &c., as she and her mother might have done !

The old Princesse Adèlaide (who seemed very feeble), after a few kind words to Lady Olive, expressed a wish to retire to rest ; and rose, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting ; but the sweet old Queen gave her sister-in-law her arm, and supported

her herself to the door; then, embracing her affectionately, returned to the sofa. The old princess died not many weeks later, and was mercifully spared the knowledge of her brother's flight from Paris.

Iona soon began to find the party decidedly dull. The royal sisters-in-law conversed with each other in low voices, while the Queen and Lady Olive talked over old scenes and old friends.

‘But I am left out in the cold,’ thought Iona; ‘voted a bore! I am sure I shall yawn,—or shall I scream, and create some astonishment!’

At that moment a gentleman entered with bows and obeisances, and said some words to the Queen, who smiled and looked

pleased, and in a few minutes a beautiful vision appeared in the doorway. It was Dorinda—the *Princesse de la Styrie* !

The Queen once more rose to receive her guest, and the *Duchesse de Nemours* exclaimed, under her breath,

‘*Ah ! qu’elle est belle. Mais c’est un rêve, un poème !*’

Certainly anything more lovely could scarcely be conceived. The princess’s gown was of silver tissue, and on her nut-brown hair was set a tiara of many-coloured stones, exactly matching the girdle which she always wore, and with which we are so familiar. Every movement, as she bent and kissed the Queen’s hand, was grace itself, and she was received with much cordiality by the princesses. Lady Olive

at once took leave, and as she passed Dorinda, kissed her, saying,

‘I did not know you had come.’

‘I only arrived yesterday—will come and see you to-morrow,’ was the response; and Lady Olive and Iona drove back to Paris.

It was now two days before the *Jour de l'an*. The shops were all decked out as only Paris shops at that season can be, and crowds were promenading the streets; but that the shops were not the only source of interest and excitement was evident, and equally so that the sulky, savage-looking men, and wildly-gesticulating women, who mingled with the rest, were neither purchasers of bon-bons, nor sight-seers.

A great political crisis was pending, and the clouds which for so long had darkened the French horizon were about to burst. Louis Philippe, the citizen king, had for eighteen years occupied the throne of the Bourbons ; but that throne was now rocking and tottering to its fall.

The autocrat, King Mob, was waking from his long lethargy, and, like an evil giant, had begun to shake his tangled mane from out his blood-shot eyes,—to sharpen his deadly weapons,—and to don his filthy garments. Much alarm was beginning to be felt among the higher classes in Paris, and Lady Olive had that day been informed by the senior *attaché* of the British embassy that it would be impossible for her to leave for England

(as she, and so many, wished to do), at present, but that she must remain quiescent, and watch till a safe opportunity for the move should offer itself.

The *attaché* had hardly quitted the room, after giving his unpalatable advice, before Dorinda dropped in to see her friend, and talk over the situation; and the two ladies sat themselves at the window to watch the crowd, which was swarming hither and thither, while their voices were buzzing like bees outside a hive.

‘What shall I do?’ cried Olive; ‘I promised everybody to be home by New Year’s Day.’

‘Oh!’ answered Dorinda. ‘I am sure Mr. E—— is right, and that it would not be safe to travel now—even if we could!’

Some of the *ouvriers* looked quite viciously at me, as I got into the carriage to come here; and a woman came up and shook her fist at me! I was quite glad to get into this hotel. We must watch events, Olive, and start as soon as we can!

‘But, Dorinda, why do you say “*we*?” for you are *chez-vous*, and have everybody you care for most in Paris,—while I——’

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lord Baltimore,—a gentleman who was a great friend of Lady Olive’s, and one who merits a short description.

Lord Baltimore was past seventy, and the true conventional type of an aristocrat of the old English school. In appearance he was tall, spare, and upright as a dart.

Scrupulous cleanliness, and excessive refinement both in body and mind, were his chief characteristics. His hair (what he had of it) was snowy white, but it consisted solely in a silky fringe which garnished a head as bald as an egg, and which shone like a billiard-ball. His complexion was fresh, red and white, his nose aquiline and rather large, his eyes very blue, and his teeth perfect (and his own !). His neck was swathed in snow-white bandages (*à la* George IV.) which apparently served two purposes : first, to strangle their proprietor, and secondly, to support a 'stick-up' collar which momentarily appeared in danger of amputating a pair of very pink ears. His nether garments were tightly strapped over irreproachable

little shining boots, and his pocket-handkerchief was large and of the very finest white cambric, embroidered with a coronet and saturated in lavender water.

Lord Baltimore's manners were unchangeably stiff and ceremonious, and when conversing with any woman (of whatever grade) he became full of *petits soins*, which were stiffly ceremonious also. Nothing could exceed his respect for, or the deference he showed to, a woman, were she countess or kitchen-maid; and his excessive kindliness of disposition would crop up on all occasions. He reminded one curiously of Sir Peter Teazle, and, in common with that gentleman of blessed memory, the old peer also possessed a Lady Teazle! but the *régnante*,

unlike her predecessor, was a French-woman.

Lady Baltimore was very young, very pretty, and much wearied by her husband's jealous adoration ; for the old peer was decidedly jealous, although (strange anomaly !) he would have died rather than doubt his wife's goodness and virtue ! But whether his faith in the little French-woman was quite well placed, and whether such a very French wife were suitable to such a very English husband (jealous of his dignity as well as his honour) were moot questions. Certainly, at times Lady Baltimore's discretion (taking the word in its literal not invidious sense) was by no means as remarkable as her valour ; for after she and ' her B,' (as she called her husband)

had left Paris for good, a full suit of diminutive male attire, together with a *blonde* wig, and ditto heavy *moustache*, were found at the bottom of 'Miladi's' wardrobe, and it was whispered about that 'now it was fully explained how Lady Baltimore had always been so well posted up in the political events of the day, seeing that the little male costume, blonde wig, &c., &c., were recognised by many, as having been seen mingling with the mob at different times !'

Everyone knew that the little lady was a staunch republican at heart (although her Tory husband pretended to ignore the fact) ; but, to do her justice, no one suspected her of anything worse than a love of excitement, which she called patriotism,

but which (in her) was born of bourgeois blood and excessive boredom at home.

One other trait in Lady Baltimore's character was a hatred of the placid, almost immovable dignity which signalized the real *grande dame Anglaise*,—a dignity she envied, but could not attain; consequently she delighted in spreading disquieting political reports amongst the English ladies, through her credulous old husband,—reports which were frightening in the extreme, especially when there was (as at the present moment) a strong admixture of truth in their composition; and she would chuckle over the thought of how the *aplomb* of these *aristocrates* would be disturbed, and the prestige of the *bas*

peuple in the ascendant, through her means.

But to return to Lord Baltimore, who had just entered Lady Olive's room in much agitation, and who scarcely gave himself time to draw off his tightly-fitting glove for the ceremony of shaking hands, before saying, breathlessly,

‘Have you heard the news?’

‘No! what news?’ gasped both ladies at once. ‘Tell us, pray.’

‘The gas is to be cut off to-night all over Paris, and there is to be a general sacking of the town, beginning in the Roo Rivolly,’ (so pronounced the old peer), ‘the Roo deller Pay, and the Plas Varn-doam, in fact in the principal quarters

where all the rich Americans and English are congregated !’

‘ Good heavens !’ exclaimed Olive and Dorinda, ‘ who told you so ?’

‘ My lady did !’ answered the excited B.

‘ And how did she hear it ?’ asked Olive.

‘ Through some of these d——d republicans,’ answered B., too uneasy to care just then about manners.

‘ Oh, what shall I do ?’ cried Lady Olive ; ‘ I wish I had not brought Iona here, and Bardel too—he is so lame and so terrified ! It is like having two children instead of one.’

‘ But think of *us*,’ groaned old B., ‘ think of all my lady’s jewels. One hun-

dred thousand pounds' worth ! What will become of them ?—but I must go back to Netta ; I only came to put you on your guard.'

'But, my dear lord,' said the princess, 'where is the good of frightening us to death and yet telling us no way out of it ? I think we had better go in a body to the British embassy for protection.'

'Well, I don't know that Lord N—— would thank you for that,' answered old B., who did not care for the fair Dorinda, and would not have wept bitter tears had the gas been put out, and she permanently mislaid in the dark ; 'but I must go to Netta, and see about the jewels. Good-day.'

'Bother his jewels !' said Dorinda, scorn-

fully, as he shut the door; ‘I went to his “at home” last week, and he had them all brought out for people to see! and “my lady” stood by, looking like a little *conturière*, and pretended it was against her principles to possess them. Serve him right if he loses them, old fool!’

Dorinda did not love either Sir Peter or Lady Teazle, and the said jewels had been an eye-sore to her, for she had none like them herself, and was not above petty jealousy. The pearls, she acknowledged, were very fine, and the old amethysts also,—therefore she reiterated with much fervour, and little refinement,

‘Bother his old amethysts and his old self also!’

The Prince de la Styrie now arrived,

looking anxious and worried, and he told the princess he feared she must walk back, as it was unsafe to bring the carriage, for barricading had begun. So the husband and wife walked away together, leaving poor Lady Olive to herself and her meditations, which were not reassuring. It was safest, she was told, to remain in the house, which she did; so she and Iona in the drawing-room, and old Bardel in the *ante-chambre*, sat listening, hour after hour, to the sounds of cannon, in the distant Faubourg St. Antoine, and of cries and tumult near at hand, wishing themselves safe once more in Old England.

The next day 'old B.' again called on

Lady Olive ; he seemed relieved to find her alone—but was a changed man. His spirits were gone, his clothes hung about him, and he seemed afraid to move hand or foot ; also he experienced much apparent difficulty in sitting down.

‘I am afraid you are not well, Lord Baltimore,’ said Olive, kindly.

‘Thank you ! I am quite well,’ answered the old gentleman, with a mysterious dignity in his voice and manner.

‘I am afraid you are suffering from rheumatism ?’ persisted Lady Olive. ‘I am so sorry for you ; but I know such a capital remedy ! If you take——’

‘Thank you ! I have no rheumatism.’

‘Now I know ! you have lumbago ! and how painful it is ! but don’t mind

telling me—an old friend—an old woman ! and I wish you would try——’

‘Thank you, no !’ with deeper mystery than before. ‘I am quite well—no lumbago !’

Lady Olive looked at him in surprise, and she began to fear there must be some unusual cause for his evident anxiety and uneasiness !

‘Perhaps he has discovered a secret political danger,’—she thought—‘and he wishes to break it gently to me !—but why—why should it affect—his sitting down ?’

In a few minutes Lord Baltimore, wishing to relieve his feelings, and seeing Lady Olive would not question him further, rose with difficulty from his chair, and, approaching her, said, in a whisper,

‘I have a confidence to make to you, —as to an old friend.’

On tip-toe he came nearer, and,—after looking cautiously around,—to his companion’s amazement and discomfiture, he began—to undress !

‘Oh ! he’s mad !’ thought Olive. ‘What shall I do ? I do hope and pray Iona may not come in ; and I wish Bardel *would* ! If I *could* only get at the bell !’

In the meantime old B. got nearer and nearer, and suddenly tearing open his shirt-front, displayed chains of pearls, diamonds, rubies, amethysts, hanging round his neck !—then, rapidly closing it again, he whispered,

‘Hush ! all my lady’s jewels ! My idea !’

I never part with them day or night! She knows nothing, but I felt I must confide in some one! and you will keep my secret! Her bracelets are round my arms!—and her tiara is round my leg! Some of the brooches prick a little sometimes, but it is worth it!—One hundred thousand pounds' worth! Don't tell any-one.—No, thank you!—You are very good,—but I won't sit down again,—till I get home.'

Much agitated, he then bid Olive farewell, and she watched the poor old man endeavouring to walk jauntily down the Rue de la Paix,—as if perfectly at his ease!

He and Lady Olive did not meet again for months, not till they were

both safe back in London ; and then he told her he had walked about Paris for nearly three weeks with one hundred thousand pounds' worth of jewels concealed about him.

‘ And all,’ philosophized Lady Olive, ‘ for the sake of a wretched little vulgar Frenchwoman, who dons unmentionables, and shouts, “ *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité !* ” with *ouvriers* and *grisettes !* A strange pair, certainly !’

As soon as it was safe, Olive and her daughter left Paris, and the Princesse de la Styrie, who professed herself much alarmed at the state of affairs, implored to be allowed to accompany her friend to England ; reminding her reluctant husband that, by doing so, she should only be fore-

stalling her visit to London by a few weeks, as he had presented her with a beautiful house in B—— Square, and had agreed she should go thither in the early spring, to furnish it for the season. The prince consented, as he had done (as yet) to his lovely wife's every whim; but when Lady Olive heard what a pain it had been to him to part from Dorinda for so long, (he being bound to Paris at present by business,) she offered, not only to take the princess into her house till the B—— Square one was fit for occupation, but she sent a message to the prince, through Dorinda, begging him to visit her also, as soon as he conveniently could. This did not, however, suit Dorinda. She was delighted, personally,

to make use of her friend's pretty house at Kensington, to live there in comfort, and do exactly as she pleased for awhile; but her husband, she felt, would be in the way. So she conveniently forgot to deliver the message; and managed that her husband and Lady Olive should not meet again, before the latter left Paris, which she did a few days later, accompanied by her manœuvring friend.





CHAPTER XV.

‘It is the little rift within the lute
That, by-and-by, will make the music mute,
And ever-widening, slowly silence all.’



LADY OLIVE and her guest had been in London for nearly a week when the following conversation took place, as the two ladies were sitting at needlework :

‘But, Dorinda, you knew I especially invited Prince Bernard—begging him to

come as soon as he could; and certainly you gave me to understand that——’

‘Olive, dear,’ said the princess, laughing, ‘don’t you know that an “understanding” is only another word for a “mis-understanding”?’

‘Well—but, Dorinda, you know, you made me think you had given my message to the prince, for you said he “thanked me”; and you would not let me write to him, for you also said he was “so busy,” and that, “if I wrote, he would think it necessary to answer, &c., &c.,” so, if there *was* a misunderstanding, you made it.’

‘Well, dearest, I forgot to tell him,—or rather I thought it would be so pleasant to have you all to myself.’

‘Nay, Dorinda,’ said Olive, coldly, and looking annoyed, ‘you have “had me alone” almost every day in Paris; and now you have to be out all day—furnishing, so you can’t see much of me.’

‘Well, well,’ answered Dorinda, rather impatiently, ‘he likes Paris, and I like London best; so he stays in Paris, and I come home for a little.’

‘But surely, Dorinda, “home” is where one’s husband is—at least,’—Lady Olive said, softly, with tears in her eyes,—‘*I* used to think so.’

‘H’m! I’m not so sure,’ was Dorinda’s unsatisfactory rejoinder; so, for the present, Olive said no more; but she felt it was the first ‘rift in the lute;’ and, for the first time in her life, she was displeased

with Dorinda, recognizing the fact that she had not been truthful, and that also, for some reason, she had manœuvred to rid herself for a while of her husband's presence. Olive was all the more annoyed when she remembered how struck she had been, (when visiting her in Paris,) at Dorinda's scant appreciation of her husband's tender homage, also that she had developed a love of admiration, and a careless, unguarded mode of speech and action, which grated upon English prejudices. But she had comforted herself, then, by recollecting that 'foreign ways are not like English ways,' and that, if Dorinda's husband was satisfied, Dorinda's friend had no right to interfere. Now, however, the case was different; the husband was

absent, and the responsibility was hers—Lady Olive's.

So she began to regret her hitherto willing hospitality, and that same evening took the opportunity of saying :

‘Dorinda, I shall write myself to Prince Bernard, and ask him to come, for——’

‘Pray do nothing of the kind,’ answered Dorinda, rather hotly ; ‘for it would be no use. He is gone to his Château in Corsica—making preparations for my reception ; for I have never been there yet. No ! no ! don't worry yourself ; he gave me leave to stay in London till he comes to meet me—and carry me off to Talavo.’ Then, kissing Olive affectionately, she said, playfully and coaxingly, ‘You are such a

dear old-fashioned goody ! and you forget that Bernard is old enough to be my grandfather.'

'Not quite,' murmured Olive. 'Anyhow, *you* should be the last to remind him of that, Dorinda.'

'—Besides, he is a Frenchman, and French husbands are not like English ones. He amuses himself,—and leaves me to do the same. I don't interfere with him,—and I hope he never will with me.'

'Oh ! Dorinda,' said Lady Olive, with a horrified expression of countenance, 'what *can* you mean ?'

'Everything,—and nothing,' laughed Dorinda ; 'but, anyway, he trusts me. See !' gaily flourishing a small paper

before Lady Olive's eyes, and putting it into her hand.

‘ Oh ! Dorinda, a cheque for two thousand pounds ! How good and kind he is ! Surely you must be touched ? ’

The princess laughed merrily, and said,

‘ He and I understand each other, and he is quite satisfied with me ! ’

This conversation somewhat relieved Lady Olive's mind, but all the same, she began to long for the time when Dorinda would no longer be her individual care.

One day the princess told her hostess that the prince wished her to go and choose some jewels, saying he should like his wife to look her best when she should

make her first appearance at the Château Talavo ; so Lady Olive drove her to a well-known jeweller's in Bond Street—a Frenchman, who recognized Dorinda directly—and who, after receiving her with the traditional obsequiousness, turned to the young men standing behind the counter, on both sides of the entrance, and repeated emphatically words which sounded like ‘two pun’ ten,’ and which were repeated (Lady Olive remarked) by each man to his neighbour, as she and the princess advanced to the top of the shop.

Dorinda bought jewels of some value, and paid for them, having had a great many produced for her inspection ; and as she and Lady Olive were driving from the

door, the same official who had received them, made a sign to the coachman to stop; then, advancing with much respect, he inquired *whether the diamond hoop-ring which had not been paid for, was to be put down to the princess's account, or—was there a mistake?* Dorinda looked innocently surprised at first; then, with a merry laugh, she drew the ring off her finger, saying,

‘ See, what a theft I have committed, Olive! I actually tried the ring on and walked off with it;’ then coolly handing it to the shopman, who bowed, gravely silent, the carriage drove away.

‘ Poor Dorinda!’ said Lady Olive, ‘ what a disagreeable mistake! The man looked as if we had been shop-lifters.’

‘Yes, an odious man!’ said Dorinda, lightly; ‘and now let us have a breath of fresh air in the Park. I hear it is already very crowded of an afternoon.’

Lady Olive saw Dorinda was put out about the ring, so she said no more; but years after she was told by a maid who married one of the young men in that very shop, that the words she overheard were not ‘two-pound-ten,’ as she had supposed, but ‘two upon ten,’ (*two eyes upon ten* fingers!), words of fearful import, if Olive had only comprehended them.

According to Dorinda’s suggestion they drove at once to the Park—round the ring (as was then the fashion)—and one of the first carriages they met con-

tained the Duchess of Cheviotdale, who seemed charmed at the meeting, and kissed her hand warmly to the princess. Not so the beautiful, but stern, pale lady at her side. Lady Margaret Saville felt no call to be pleased at the recognition, and, in fact, turned her head away. Dorinda bit her lip, and, laughing sarcastically, exclaimed,

‘I wonder how her Guy is?’

‘Oh, dear Dorinda,’ said Lady Olive, looking hurt, ‘you should not laugh at what nearly broke Margaret’s heart!’ then, seeing Dorinda looked annoyed, she added kindly: ‘I know, of course, you were not to blame, but she has never been the same since!’

‘Really,’ answered the princess, coldly.

‘ Well, she does begin to look quite old. Does anyone know where Sir Guy is ?’

‘ The duke gave him a farm somewhere, but I fancied I saw him in London a day or two ago.’

They had now entered the road by the Serpentine river, and, as the way was narrow, they drove slowly ; but suddenly there seemed a complete block,—the carriage stood motionless,—and for some minutes Olive and her companion sat passively watching the string of carriages which were passing close to them, in the opposite direction. They had not waited long before some check seemed to hinder the progress of the rival file of carriages

also, and a large, snuff-coloured *barouche* with yellow wheels—very smartly turned out,—came to a stand, so close to Lady Olive's modest little sociable, that the inmates of both carriages might have shaken hands; but they did not seem by any means inclined to take advantage of the opportunity; and Dorinda turned very pale, for she sat almost face to face with a fat, over-dressed lady in the snuff-coloured carriage, whose naturally red complexion became every moment deeper in colour, till it blazed forth like a full-blown peony! A singularly handsome young man, who gazed insolently at Dorinda, sat *vis-à-vis* to the fat lady, at whose side was a dignified-looking

gentleman with a green shade over his eyes.

‘God bless my soul!’ said the fat lady, audibly, and making a face as if she were going to cry; then the carriages moved on, and Olive laughingly turned to Dorinda.

‘Who on earth was that woman?’ said she; ‘they all seemed to stare so at us!’

Then, seeing Dorinda’s pale face, she forgot her question, and said, anxiously,

‘Are you ill, dear?’

‘Yes,’ answered Dorinda, ‘I feel faint, sick,—and it has turned so cold. Let us go home!’

All the way home and for the rest of

the evening, the princess was not well; she often sighed, and once, Olive fancied, she wept.





CHAPTER XVI.

‘Charity (Love) thinketh no evil.’

THE Princesse de la Styrie. did not remain much longer at Kensington ; as soon as a single room could be prepared she moved into her own house, which, when furnished, was the ‘talk of the town,’ such was its magnificence.

She now gave crushes, balls, theatricals, *petits soupers* after the play, &c., &c. ; but

Lady Olive, being much occupied by her daughter's delicate health, never accepted any of the invitations which she constantly received from the princess; and thus it came about that, for weeks, she had seen nothing of her friend. One day, to her great surprise, she heard,—partly through gossip and partly from the newspapers,—that the prince had suddenly arrived one evening, during a most gorgeous entertainment, which surpassed anything the princess had yet attempted, and that—after helping his wife, with much cordiality, to entertain her guests—he had, the next day, carried her off to France!

All kinds of fears and anxieties arose in Olive's mind when she heard this news:

more especially as she had gathered from different sources that, latterly, Dorinda's imprudence of behaviour, as regarded her former admirer, Sir Guy Deverill, had been the favourite topic of conversation amongst the London gossips—and more especially amongst those kind friends who had benefitted most by the princess's hospitality! Lady Olive did not know to whom to turn for reliable information, when, one afternoon, the kind old Duchess of Cheviotdale called, and, with ill-disguised anxiety, proceeded to state all she knew.

The duchess herself had not been at Dorinda's last ball, for Lady Margaret (who lived now entirely with the Cheviotdales) refused to go, never having forgiven

or visited the princess. The duke, however, went (for Dorinda always maintained her fascination over him), and his account was, that the ball was a beautiful one; no expense had been spared, and the hostess looked quite magnificent, being covered with jewels. She wore the well-known girdle, with an immensely high tiara to match it, composed of priceless gems of all colours, and bracelets *en suite*.

She received her guests with the grace and charm peculiar to her; but, the duke added, he was much annoyed to see that his nephew ('that fool Guy!' he called him,) never left the hostess's side! So, taking upon himself the *rôle* of the princess's oldest and most intimate friend, the

duke spoke seriously to her upon the subject.

She took it very well, he said, and laughing gently, answered,

‘ You see, Uncle Chevy, there are several who profess themselves as devoted as Guy, so there is safety in numbers. A grass-widow, you know, is considered fair game by all idle young men !’

‘ Ay,’ answered the duke, ‘ but “ the Princesse de la Styrie ” should not be measured by others ; for *noblesse oblige*.’

‘ Well,’ she returned, ‘ I shall soon have to be shut up in the country, where ’—shrugging her pretty shoulders (of which enough was already visible) with a gesture

of disgust—‘I shall have no one but peasants in blouses and *sabots* around me. So, you see, I am making hay while the sun shines!’

‘And,’ said the duke, gravely,—‘in the present case,—who is this—sun?’

‘My liberty!’ the princess answered, rather crossly; and at that moment,—most inopportunately,—Sir Guy appeared in search of Dorinda, claiming her as his partner. On seeing his uncle, he looked foolish,—embarrassed.

‘How is the farming getting on, Guy?’ asked the duke. ‘I suppose you keep a bailiff or two during your necessitated absences?’

‘I return to-morrow, uncle.’

‘I am glad to hear it,’ answered the duke, drily ; ‘not a day too soon.’

With heightened colour, Dorinda took her cavalier’s arm, and left the room apparently to join the dancers.

‘Old fool !’ said Guy, below his breath, ‘what right has he to interfere between me and—and—’ looking down upon his beautiful partner—‘and my happiness, my——’

‘Oh !’ laughed Dorinda, ‘people often think they are virtuous, when they are only jealous. Poor old Uncle Chevy ! He would not be half as severe, if I were to allow *him* to sit by me—on the sofa—all night, he lecturing me (very paternally, of course !) I,—weeping repentantly,—with my head on his shoulder !’

Laughing lightly, the two would-be dancers, after making a feeble attempt to gain the ball-room through the crowd, declared it impossible ; and, ascending the stairs, stepped out into the large balcony, which extended half round two sides of the house, and which had been transformed into a perfect fairy-abode of flowers. Sofas and chairs had been placed here and there, hidden by shrubs,—palms, azaleas, and camelia-trees ;—while an awning of wirework secured privacy without impeding the ‘balmy breath’ of the summer air.

The duke, who had noticed the couple’s futile attempt to enter the ball-room, and their subsequent change of intention, shook his head, and, meditating his own

return home, entered the supper-room.

The supper-room was a long, well-proportioned gallery, opening on to the principal entrance-hall, which was circular, and supported by marble columns. There were no doors to the supper-room, only crimson velvet curtains, artistically draped back, so as to form a frame to the picture of the hall beyond.

As the duke waited, the front-door bell rang; the hall-porter opened the door, and—with an exclamation of surprise—eagerly summoned some of the other domestics. An individual in travelling costume now entered, and gazed with apparent astonishment at the evidences of festivity.

‘It is the prince!’ ejaculated the duke,

as the traveller came forward, and shook him cordially by the hand.

‘Dear Bernard ! What a surprise ! I am so glad to see you.’

The prince quickly suppressed all feelings of astonishment at the tumult and confusion which greeted his return, and answered :

‘Thank you, dear duke ;’ then, turning to some of the guests who were standing about in the supper-room, he said, quite naturally, and with his usual courtesy, ‘I have not the great pleasure of being acquainted with my wife’s English friends, but they are all heartily welcome ; and I hope that my unlooked-for return may not check the general amusement.’

Then he said to the duke :

‘ My letter cannot have arrived ! Where is my wife ? ’

The duke answered, he felt sure, had any letter arrived, the princess would have told him.

‘ You need not disturb the princess,’ said the prince, stopping some of the domestics who were about to search for the lady, ‘ I will go myself ;’ and, after a few more words with the duke, he left the room, and, first looking about him, ascended the staircase, and entered a room, which evidently was his wife’s boudoir.

He was attracted at once by the excessive beauty of the plants in the balcony.

‘ How exquisite !’ he thought ; ‘ and all her taste ! How lovely she will make Talavo !’

As he stood, he detected the murmuring of voices in the balcony, and then a pretty musical laugh met his ear.

‘Ah ! I think I recognize that laugh ! Dorinda cannot be very far off.’

He stepped into the balcony, and, turning towards the spot whence the sounds emanated, he beheld his wife—on a sofa, which was all but concealed by plants and camelia-trees. Sir Guy (whom the prince had never seen) was sitting by her side, his arm was thrown round the back of the couch, and he was leaning forward, till his face nearly touched his companion’s. She was laughing in a half-embarrassed way, and, with one hand on his shoulder, seemed playfully pushing him away from her, in much too familiar

and *bourgeois* a style to please the prince.

Dorinda was the first to see her husband (he having entered the balcony at Sir Guy's back), and as she did so, every drop of blood forsook her face,—leaving it like that of a corpse. Guy saw Dorinda's evident emotion, and translating it into passion for himself, and as a favourable answer to his pleading, threw himself at the princess's feet, and, seizing her hand, covered it with kisses. But at that moment he received a sharp cut from a cane across his shoulders, while a mocking voice said,

‘ Rise, *preux chevalier sans éperons !*’

Turning fiercely to see who was his assailant, Sir Guy beheld towering over

him, the fine figure of a man, who, though past his prime, was every inch a soldier. A look of amusement mixed with contempt was on his face as he met the gaze of the indignant young man, and his words were distinct, albeit with a strong foreign accent, as, pointing to the egress from the balcony, he said,

‘Take your chastisement, young man, and your lesson,—and go ; and I, for one, shall think none the worse of you if you do so quietly. I do not fight with—boys. I can condone a youthful folly, especially’ (bowing ceremoniously to the princess) ‘with such a temptation ! If, however, you prefer to hear from, or to see me, I—the Prince de la Styrie—shall be here—*à vos ordres*—till to-morrow evening.’

Then, clinking his heels together, and bowing stiffly, he took his wife's hand, and, leading her into the boudoir, shut the door—and sat down.





CHAPTER XVII.

‘Make the doors upon a woman’s wit, and it will out at the casement; shut that, and ’twill out at the keyhole; stop that, ’twill fly with the smoke out at the chimney!’

DORINDA was the first to speak.
 ‘You are not angry with me, Bernard?’ she said, in her childishly innocent way; then, bursting into tears, she cast herself on his breast. ‘I never dreamt—never thought,’ she sobbed, ‘that Guy, who has been like my

brother, could be so foolish ; and oh, dear, *dear* Bernard, I am so glad to see you !

‘Dorinda,’ answered the prince, tenderly, but with a glitter of determination in his eyes, ‘you are young, beautiful, and not over-wise. It has been my fault ; I should not have left you so long alone ; but I have been so busy at Talavo. *I will never leave you again.*’

(‘Good gracious !’ thought Dorinda—
‘how *more* than dreadful !’)

‘I have been very busy,’ the prince continued, ‘at the old château, preparing *such* a reception for you, and I wrote telling you I should arrive to-night ; but somehow my letter has missed, so I took you unawares. I am not angry, dear,

because, of course, I know you could not be false to me—*avec ce—ce noodle là!*—otherwise I should have acted very differently; but I will not leave you again. To-morrow we will start for home—for Corsica.'

'To-morrow?—Bernard!' said Dorinda, faintly.

'Yes, to-morrow, without fail. Now let me look at you. *Que tu-es belle!* These rubies are new—where do they come from?'

'Out of the cheque my *bon mari* sent me, and the tiara too! Do you like them, Bernard?'

'I like——you,' her husband answered, kissing her tenderly—'and now I will go and dress—come and help me.'

In a few minutes the prince and princess reappeared in the ball-room amongst their guests, and upon the most amicable terms. As for Sir Guy, as soon as he got his dismissal from the prince, with an oath he turned, and left the balcony, and descending the stairs, three or four steps at a time, threw on his overcoat and crush-hat, and nearly fell over the duke, who was also—but more calmly—leaving the house.

‘Hoity-toity!’ exclaimed his Grace, ‘whither so fast, young man?’ then seeing by his nephew’s countenance there was something the matter, and being really attached to, although at times put out with, the young man, he linked his

arm in his, and after some management, drew from him the cause of his hasty departure.

On hearing the story the old man looked grave, and checking his pace, said :

‘Guy, you have behaved abominably ; but, whatever step you may see fit to take after to-night, your first thought now, as a gentleman, must be to shield the princess from scandal ; so return to the ball ; for if you leave, the moment the prince puts in an appearance, all the evil tongues in London will begin to cackle ! I will return to the ball also, and you must let me apologise to the prince for you, (for you owe him reparation, and you see he is ready to be lenient to your youth,) so come, take off

your coat again, and choose a partner at once ; dance furiously, and leave the rest to me.'

With a bad grace Guy complied, and the ball continued with much spirit, and for many hours.

Between the dances the duke had a few words with the prince, and then presented Guy, and Bernard received him good-naturedly. Thus a disagreeable business was patched up, and Guy was amongst those who were still dancing, long after the sun had risen,—putting the lamps and candles to shame,—to say nothing of most of the dancers' complexions !

That same sun which rose so merrily to the sound of musical instruments, and the

popping of champagne bottles, ushered in a great Battle, one which was to decide the vexed question between the prince and his wife, as to which of the two should eventually govern.

The prince, as we know, was the very type of a soldier, having learnt both obedience and command; and, being an apt scholar, he knew well how to teach the former, and wield the latter. He never bent to anyone's will, and openly avowed it! People knew exactly 'where they were' with him. He was quite capable, however, of being softened into compliance,—but only if it were fully acknowledged that might and right both belonged to him. Dorinda carried *her*

warfare on differently. *Her* tactics were those of stratagem ; and she was by no means a foe to be despised.

Our readers will remember that the night before, during the interview between the husband and wife in the boudoir, the prince had said very decisively,

‘ We start to-morrow for Corsica.’

Dorinda had faintly answered,

‘ To-morrow ?—Bernard !’

‘ Yes, Dorinda, to-morrow ;’ and there had been a soldierly ring of authority in her husband’s voice, as he made this rejoinder, which would have awed Dorinda had she loved him,—but which only raised her opposition, as she did not.

‘To go or not to go, that is the question,’ Dorinda had said to herself; ‘and we shall see which it will be.’

After the ball-guests had departed, and all the lights had been put out, the prince and princess retired to rest, and Dorinda heard her husband give strict orders that at a certain hour,—should he be still sleeping,—he was to be aroused, as he intended they should all start for abroad that evening, and that such things as could not be ready would be despatched later.

The princess undressed leisurely, and when in bed called Estelle to her side, and, after a long, whispered conversation, the maid was dismissed, and the mistress

lay down—with some such thoughts as these :

‘ If Bernard thinks that such serious domestic arrangements are to be made without my knowledge or consent, he is mistaken ! Why, if I am to be bundled about like this, at his will, I shall soon sink into a nonentity ! I should be his slave for life ! ’

After a few hours’ sleep the prince rose, dressed, and went out to call upon the Cheviotdales ; but Dorinda slept on.

On returning home, the prince entered his wife’s boudoir, adjoining her bedroom.

The room was empty, and he was about to invade the bed-chamber, when

Estelle entered, and inquired what she should do? She had been desired by the princess on no account to disturb her, as she was liable to faint if hurriedly awoke: and yet even now, there would scarcely be time for the necessary travelling preparations.

The prince was annoyed, and, without hesitation, entered his wife's bed-room. It was quite dark, but he desired the blinds should be raised, and, approaching the bed, put his hand kindly and caressingly on the sleeping beauty's shoulder, and said, playfully,

‘Allons! ma petite femme, lève-toi! Ouvre-tes jolis yeux!’

Dorinda turned round, and, opening her eyes, looked dazed, complained of her head

—*must* she get up? She really could not! She felt so tired, so ill, &c., &c.

‘Dorinda, *lève-toi, mon ange!* You must have some *déjeuner* also.’

Dorinda said she was too ill—too tired;—that she felt faint, &c.

The prince was perplexed, and once more explained how preparations had been made at the Château Talavo for a certain day, and that they *must* start.

Dorinda now began to cry; she must have a doctor,—she did not know what was the matter, &c.

Much distressed, and never for a moment supposing that anyone, least of all his wife, would dare deliberately to coerce his wishes, the prince turned to the dressing-table to get a smelling-bottle, when

his eye caught the reflection of the weeping, fainting invalid, laughing at him behind his back, and (what children call) ‘making a face’ of derision!

Disgusted at the vulgar insolence of the act, he was too proud to let Dorinda know he had detected it, but it was a revelation to him! It was the feather which showed the direction of the wind—the shibboleth of vulgarity! In an instant of time the whole current of the old patrician’s blood seemed to freeze, and all his affections to turn and flow into a different channel,—away from her—into the broad sea of disgust! This one act of (what he considered) low insubordination was ever afterwards the false note in the would-be harmony of his married life;

that one accidental glance of a second's duration, had disclosed a gulf between him and his nearest,—between him and the woman whose head rested on his pillow, and who lay in his bosom ; a gulf which, however eagerly in after days he might, and did try to bridge over,—to hide,—to forget the existence of, was ever there!— yawning hopelessly between them,—the chasm of vulgarity !

‘ A sin,’ he thought, ‘ I might have forgiven, but a vulgarity—never ! No ! I have discovered that the *Princesse de la Styrie*, my wife, is nothing but a vulgarian ; and, even if she remains a pure wife, my worldly dignity and position will never be safe in her keeping ! Elle ne s’y comprend pas !’

With a repulsion in his mind, therefore, the excessive bitterness of which she would have been at a loss to comprehend, and which he scorned to express,—(and of which therefore she knew nothing,) he again approached the bed, this time saying, sternly :

‘ Ill or well, madame, in a few hours you start for your new home, unless you prefer returning to your old one ! I, the Prince de la Styrie, am not accustomed to having my orders questioned, and I am too old to begin now.’

With that, he left the room ; and in a few minutes Estelle re-entered, looking terrified, and saying that the prince had told her that unless she (Estelle) wished to lose her situation, she must be ready to start at the hour fixed.

‘ And he meant it too, madame,’ said the woman, ‘ and I dare not disobey.’

When Dorinda heard this, she also felt alarmed, for the loss of her maid would have been serious ; so rising, she prepared herself for the journey, uneasy from the conviction that she had at last found a master-will.

The prince and his wife, and suite, left that evening, going straight to Paris, where they stayed for a few hours only ; then they travelled on to their destination.





CHAPTER XVIII.

‘ This is such a creature,
 Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal
 Of all professors else ; make proselytes
 Of who she bid but follow.’



HE princess could not but mark, during the journey, the change in her husband's manner towards her. He was perfectly laboriously civil, but without tenderness ; and being utterly ignorant of the small but fatal circumstance which had embittered

tered him against her, she was all the more angry.

‘He has taken me from all my friends,’ said she to Estelle, ‘and he expects me to bear it without a murmur! He may be stronger than I, but I will not be his slave. He shall suffer for this ere long!’ So she sulked, while he chafed.

At last they landed in the island that was to be their home. A rocky, wild, romantically beautiful Home, had they loved one another; but a rocky, wild, dismal home, as they did not.

The reception of Dorinda as a bride, planned and prepared by the prince himself, was calculated to have flattered and delighted any woman—except this one. There were triumphal arches, inscriptions,

bouquets of flowers, bands of music, functionaries of all kinds, and crowds of picturesque peasants; and finally the Château itself was illuminated, and a grand display of coloured rockets rose high into the sky, as they drove over the old draw-bridge, across the moat; but all—all went for nothing. Dorinda declared herself ill from the forced journey, and lay back in the carriage, with anger in her heart, *and with her eyes persistently closed!*

The prince endeavoured in vain to rouse her to a sense of what was expected from her at such a moment;—how all private feelings, and even illness, should be fought against,—ignored, so as to tender a gracious acceptance to a homage so freely offered; but she was immovable,—obstin-

ately reclining far back in the carriage like a beautiful statue. The prince was seriously displeased, but Dorinda was delighted to have had such an opportunity of punishing her husband's wilfulness; and, directly she alighted, she ascended to her own apartments, without noticing the flowers, or the luxuries prepared to welcome her; and she went to bed at once, where she stayed several days, refusing to see or speak to anyone but her maids. At last, one day, the prince, finding it unbearable, entered her bed-room. With an expression of determination on his face he dismissed the terrified Estelle, and said angrily to his weeping wife:

‘ May I ask, madame, the cause of these tears?—of this intolerable behaviour?’

No answer except tears and sobs.

‘*I will tell you, madame, as you refuse to tell me. It is nothing but a vulgar display of evil feeling,—of malice, (I speak advisedly,) akin to madness ! I have honoured you as my bride, and am ready, even now, to forgive all—if you will make reparation for your rudeness,—by—by—*’

‘*By what ?*’ asked Dorinda, pettishly.

‘*Madame, remember you have insulted all my dependants, who love and respect me, and were anxious to do the same by you ; but you refused even to look at them—at this—the beloved home of my ancestors, of which I revere every stone,—every tree ! I brought you here, as mistress of my house, but you have rejected everything and everybody, and have covered*

me with shame and ridicule. Dorinda! I never looked for love from you, nor have I sought to exact the semblance of it,—I knew the difference of our ages precluded that; but I did expect gratitude, submission, gentleness,—and a sense of dignity!’

‘In fact,’ broke in Dorinda, excitedly. ‘You expected—a slave! *Gratitude*, did you say? What for? I am as well-born as you, *mon prince*!—for by birth, I am worthy of any name! *Submission*, do you say? Nay! say the truth,—that you—(as I say,) expected a slave!’

‘Dorinda! I expected no slave! but—I did expect—a gentlewoman! Listen for a moment; I think I can prove that since our marriage you have had no reason to complain of my treatment of you. At your wish, (but against my own,) I allowed you

to amuse yourself for months in London,—to spend my money as you liked,—and without a question. From your friendship with that good Lady Olive, I took *her* as a type of your acquaintances, and was more than satisfied; and therefore I never enquired into, nor interfered with your amusements. I trusted you thoroughly, believing my honour was safe in your hands; and that I do not doubt,—even now; although, arriving unexpectedly one evening, I found you under circumstances that less trustful husbands than myself might have considered suspicious! However, I never doubted you, Dorinda! All I did was to resolve to bring you home, where I meant to surround you with every luxury, to try to make you forget your own country and your father's

house, and secure you from the dangers your beauty and inexperience might lay you open to !

‘ And may I now ask,’ Dorinda replied, with flashing eyes, ‘ what *your* amusements, *your* associates may have been in Paris during my absence ? My unswerving faith in you must have been far more noble,—more loyal,—more determinedly,—generously,—touchingly unsuspecting than yours in me ; for I confess that from what I saw of some of your—friends, their “ type ” was not quite as satisfactory as that of “ good Lady Olive ! ” and yet I trusted you ! ah ! even when I heard some—strange reports ! So come ! tell me, Bernard ! How has my “ wifely dignity ” been getting on in your hands, eh ? ’

The dark colour spread over the Frenchman's cheek, but he answered composedly,

‘Men and women are different. A man's reputation in those—those ways is not as sensitive a flower as a woman's!’

‘Ah! a *Frenchman's* reputation, perhaps!’ said Dorinda, with bitter scorn; as the one holy memory of her life,—Sir Jasper de Broke, with his keen sense of the honour and faith due to women,—rose up before her.

‘Well—well,’ impatiently returned the prince, ‘I am not here to bandy words; I come to request you, madame, to make your choice, either to rise at once and behave as the “*grande dame*” I have tried to make you (it is a *rôle* you know well how to assume, although it may be

but a clever performance!) or else I must—I will make other arrangements!’

The prince’s last words alarmed Dorinda, for she had gradually begun to suspect (and this interview had confirmed the suspicion) that she had not much hold now upon her husband’s affections; still she had one safe-guard, (she thought,) namely, that he dreaded an *ésclandre*. She believed he had cared for her at first, with what he called ‘love,’ (a very poor imitation of what she had experienced from others!) and she also believed that, if she had not left him for so long, he might have been true to her for some time; but she had lived long enough in the *grand monde* of Paris to have learnt that in that delightful city, a man generally holds himself

(and is held by others) as absolved from faith to an absent wife; and therefore she had hoped (as she half confessed to Olive) that, if she left the prince in peace to follow his inclinations, he would not interfere with hers! But here she had reckoned without her host; and these last words of his, 'I must make other arrangements,' alarmed her;—she feared she had gone too far, and she did not know what he had it in his power to do!

The prince stood by her side now, calmly awaiting her decision, and, in her extremity, the most iniquitous scheme presented itself to her mind,—a scheme which would, she thought, punish her husband,—right herself in his eyes,—and perhaps, for a while, recall his love.

‘Bernard!’ she said softly, and covering her face with both her hands. ‘You are angry with me and you love me no more! and yet—yet you do not know all!—or you would be more gentle!’

‘Nothing,’ began the prince hastily, ‘nothing can excuse you.’

‘Listen, Bernard! You should never have forced this journey on me! I dared not tell you, and now—now—my hopes are at an end! I shall have no little baby now!’

The prince turned ghastly pale; then, sinking on his knees by her side, seized her hand.

‘Is this true? Dorinda!’

‘Quite true, Bernard! I asked you to let me have a doctor before we left; but

you would not listen! Oh! Bernard, I shall never cease regretting it! But you were so hard, so determined, so obstinate that you frightened me, and prevented my confiding in you! Here she burst into tears, sobbing piteously.

‘Then God forgive me!’ groaned the prince, ‘my fondest hopes are destroyed! Oh! fool—fool that I was! Dorinda—can you forgive me!’

‘Victory—victory!’ said Dorinda, (inwardly). ‘I am saved, and he will yet be my slave!’

And for awhile it really seemed as if he would be; for after this conversation nothing could exceed his gentleness, his care of her; while she, on her side, endeavoured to ingratiate herself with him in every

way, and to make him and the people about the place forget the past. At her wish the Castle was filled with guests ('all barbarians,' thought she!) and she proved herself a perfect hostess; but it did not take long before she wearied of them, and of the monotony of Home; and the Prince, noticing it, suggested as a pleasant change that they should pay a long-promised visit to an old friend of his, the Comtesse d'Alembert, who had a beautiful old house and property, situated picturesquely on the river Loire, and who had long been anxious to make the acquaintance of Prince Bernard's bride.

The Comtesse and the prince had been brought up together, indeed at one time they had hoped to be more than friends,

but Fortune had frowned upon them ; so the pretty Marie de St. Simon had married the Comte d'Alembert, the last scion of an old legitimist family ; and, although it had been a '*mariage de convenance*,' it had proved a happy one, with the exception that no children were born to them, and the family died out with the Comte.

The Comtesse was now a rich widow, and the house (which at her death would, with all its contents, pass to a distant cousin of a different name) was a perfect museum of ancient *objets d'art* mostly gifts from the Kings of France to their devoted followers of the D'Alembert family.

There were a great many visitors staying at the Château, when the prince and

princess arrived, but none were more honoured than they. The Comtesse made them feel themselves quite at home, setting aside a suite of rooms entirely for their use, calling it by their name, and assuring them no one but themselves should ever occupy it. Dorinda was much flattered at all this attention, and the prince really hoped, from his wife's altered and gentle demeanour, that she repented her behaviour; and, acknowledging to himself that, after all, he had been the cause of bringing a great misfortune upon her, he determined that he also would change, and do his utmost to let bygones be bygones; so once more he became exquisitely tender, even deferential towards her, overwhelming her with *petits soins* and (to her

great weariness) with his constant society ! He rarely left her side, and at last became as devoted to her, and even more full of passionate admiration, than he had been in the first days of their married life !

Everyone also in the Château, male or female, were fascinated by Dorinda's beauty and grace, her sparkling wit, and pretty anglicized French. Her music also was a great charm. She sang beautifully in every language, could *improviser* for hours on the pianoforte ; and, when she accompanied her voice on the harp or guitar, her hearers' enthusiasm knew no bounds !

One evening, after dinner, the museum galleries were thrown open, and, at the urgent request of her friends, the hostess

agreed to go round and open the glass-cases, and tell the history of the principal *objets d'art* contained in them. Dorinda started with the rest, but, on entering one of the galleries, she suddenly declared she felt giddy—faint, and sank upon a couch. The prince was much alarmed, but after a few minutes Dorinda laughed and said she was subject to such attacks, and that in a quarter-of-an-hour she should be as well as ever. She insisted upon the other guests not being disappointed of their amusement, and said, if they would only allow her to rest till her giddiness had passed, she would join them. She would not hear of the Prince remaining behind with her, so with some reluctance he left her, and accompanied the Comtesse on her *tour*

d'inspection. One or two glass-cases in the gallery where Dorinda sat, were opened, and after the contents, consisting of jewels, watches, old enamels, *etuis*, &c., had been handled and admired, they were replaced,—the Comtesse herself locking the cases, but leaving the keys in the locks, for the house-keeper to collect later in the evening.

When the Comtesse and her friends returned, in about half-an-hour, Dorinda was discovered on the floor in a dead faint ! Prince Bernard rushed towards her, and, lifting her tenderly, bore her first to the open window ; but, as she showed no signs of returning consciousness, he carried her to her bed-room ; and, after he and Estelle had tried many remedies, she seemed gradually to recover, but begged she

might be put to bed, and that no one would disturb her till she rang. Then kissing the prince more affectionately than was her wont, and assuring him she felt quite well now,—quite well, he left the room content.

Dorinda appeared the next morning fresh and well, and, for some days, life flowed easily and happily at the Château d'Alemberg; but, after a while, the princess became wearied,—restless, and expressed a wish to return home to Corsica! The prince was surprised and infinitely delighted, but the Comtesse implored them to stay a little longer, as she expected some fresh guests, (among others Monsieur de Bonneval, the gentleman who would inherit the Château and all

its valuables at her decease,) and she urged so pathetically that Dorinda helped her so materially in entertaining her guests, that it would be cruel—unkind of them to leave, &c., &c. ; so they agreed to remain a week longer.

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